United Nations

S/PV.7916

Security Council

Seventy-second year

Provisional

7916th meeting

Wednesday, 5 April 2017, 3 p.m.
New York

President:	Ms. Sison	(United States of America)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Llorentty Solíz
	China	Mr. Zhang Dianbin
	Egypt	Mr. Moustafa
	Ethiopia	Ms. Guadey
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Italy	Mr. Cardi
	Japan	Mr. Bessho
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Umarov
	Russian Federation	Mr. Iliichev
	Senegal	Mr. Seck
	Sweden	Mr. Skau
	Ukraine	Mr. Yelchenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Rycroft
	Uruguay	Mr. Rosselli

Agenda

Identical letters dated 19 January 2016 from the Permanent Representative of Colombia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council (S/2016/53)

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in Colombia (S/2017/252)

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The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

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Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in Colombia (S/2017/252)

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Colombia to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Jean Arnault, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Mission in Colombia, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2017/252, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in Colombia.

I now give the floor to Mr. Arnault.

Mr. Arnault: I would like to thank the Security Council for allowing me to provide an update on developments in the implementation of the Colombia Final Peace Agreement and the mandate of the United Nations Mission in Colombia since the period covered by the Secretary-General's report (S/2017/252).

At the outset, however, I would like to convey to Ambassador María Emma Mejía Vélez the deepest sympathy of the United Nations in the wake of the tragedy in Mocoa, in the Putumayo department. I would also like to commend the quick and effective response of the national disaster management system, under the leadership of President Santos Calderón, and to reaffirm the willingness of the United Nations to support the national efforts to rescue and rebuild.

Several significant developments have taken place in the past two weeks. On 22 March the legislation on an integral justice, truth, reparation and non-repetition system was passed. It is of course a critical part of the Peace Agreement and at the core of efforts to reconcile the rights of the victims with the requirements of the transition from war to peace. A ceremony took place in Bogotá today at which the President signed decrees establishing a Truth Commission, a special unit to search for persons who disappeared as a result of the conflict and a selection committee for designating the magistrates of the Special Peace Jurisdiction, the members of the Truth Commission and the head of the special unit. The day before yesterday, a law intended to contribute to the legal security and stability of the implementation process was also passed. It commits Government officials to complying effectively with the provisions of the Peace Agreement.

A number of other steps that are provided for in the Agreement were also taken, including the transmittal of the Final Peace Agreement to the Council and the appointment of Felipe González Márquez, former Prime Minister of Spain, and José Mujica, former President of Uruguay, who will constitute the international verification component of the Peace Implementation Commission. They are supported by a secretariat made up of two very competent Colombian non-governmental organizations and backed by the Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies of the University of Notre Dame.

There has been some progress, which we expect will continue, on the separation of minors from the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC). As of 2 April, according to the International Committee of the Red Cross, 57 minors had been separated, in compliance with the commitment made by the group in May 2016. Yesterday the Government announced that the FARC had formally presented it with a list of its armed members gathered in the zones, who number 6,804, as well as a first list of 1,541 militia members.

I should make special mention of developments relating to the agreement concluded between the Government of Colombia and the FARC on the control of illegal drugs. I should recall here that the drug economy helped to sustain the Colombia conflict for decades, and that in turn the peace process has real potential for helping to combat it. In that context, the Colombian Government and the FARC agreed in January on a package of incentives to farmers willing to proceed with voluntary eradication. To date, through negotiations with communities, more than 55,000 families have volunteered to enter the crop-substitution programme. The Government is currently working on putting together the two-year package of incentives, including monthly payments to farmers; food security; productive projects; and technical support and monitoring. Delivery of the package is to begin in June.

Another significant development is the assumption of the vice-presidency by retired National Police of Colombia General Óscar Naranjo, who was also a member of the Government's peace negotiating team. His stated focus will be on the implementation of the peace agreement, security, counter-narcotics and the protection of community leaders and human rights defenders who have been victims of a pattern of killings and threats — a trend that has seen an increase in recent months. All of these issues are clearly interlinked and deserve this kind of sustained attention at the highest level of Government.

In direct relation to the Mission's mandate, the weapons laydown process has moved forward in the past 15 days. Since 24 March, the Mission has identified, marked and registered the weapons that FARC combatants brought to the camps. This exercise is nearly completed. In addition, we expect to store very shortly in the Mission's containers the weapons of all those FARC members that will participate in the implementation of the peace agreement. Numbering about 1,000, those members are involved in the tripartite Monitoring and Verification Mechanism, training for security functions, crop substitution, humanitarian demining, and peace education.

The next step for the Mission is the collection of weapons and the destruction of unstable armaments in a considerable number of arms and ammunition caches spread throughout vast, difficult-to-access areas. Several such caches have already been visited, and some explosives have been destroyed. However, now that FARC combatants are assembled in the 26 zones, that operation can be carried out at full scale. The Mission met with the FARC today in Bogotá to work on a detailed plan for systematic access to the caches, and in meetings this week the Colombian army has pledged its full support for this endeavour.

While these developments confirm that the implementation of the peace agreement is a very dynamic process, there have been concerns with regard to the slow pace of implementation in a number of sensitive areas mentioned in the report of the Secretary-General. These concerns relate in particular to the construction and equipment of FARC camps, the implementation of the amnesty law, the implementation of security guarantees and the plans for the reintegration of FARC combatants.

In that respect, at a meeting on 25 and 26 March in Cartagena to take stock of implementation 100 days after the signing of the peace agreement, the parties made important and detailed commitments to accelerating implementation precisely in those areas and in the adoption of the legislative agenda of the peace agreement. We welcome those commitments. Like the parties themselves, we believe that while the consolidation of peace will be a long-term process, there is a relatively small window of opportunity to establish solid foundations for it through the laying down of weapons, the reintegration of FARC combatants, and the delivery of peace dividends to the most affected people and areas.

Let me end by expressing our full support for the planned visit of the Security Council to Colombia next month. Since the beginning of its involvement in January of last year, the unanimous support of the Security Council has been perceived in Colombia as a guarantee of success. Its visit will provide further assurance to that effect. Indeed, this is precisely the juncture at which the international community, and this Council in particular, should voice its interest, its encouragement, and its support for the efforts of the parties and all those involved in the building of peace in Colombia.

The President: I thank Mr. Arnault for his briefing.

I now give the floor to those Council members who wish to make statements.

Mr. Rycroft (United Kingdom): I thank Mr. Arnault for his briefing, his recent report (S/2017/252) and the hard work he has done on our collective behalf.

At the outset, I would like to express my condolences to Ms. Mejía Vélez following the tragic loss of life in the Mocoa landslides at the weekend. It was such an awful tragedy, and the people of Mocoa and Colombia as a whole are in our thoughts. The disaster has cast a shadow over what has been a very positive few months for Colombia. And yet, despite the terrible loss of life, I have been struck by the resilience and resolve shown in response. I am pleased that it is a shared resolve, with the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de

Colombia (FARC) offering to work side by side with the Government to help rebuild the town. That is the same shared commitment that will be needed from the Colombian Government, the FARC and the United Nations Mission in Colombia as we write a new chapter in the country's history.

I am very pleased to see the progress already being made. The Government has committed to making peace a reality for all Colombians. The FARC have moved over 6,800 of its members into the transition zones to begin the process of laying down arms, as Mr. Arnault has just updated us. And I am reassured by his commitment, and that of his staff, as they move as swiftly as possible to meet the tough time frames ahead. We recognize that the scale of the Mission's work is ambitious and challenging, and he has our full support in those efforts.

As with all post-conflict situations, sustained implementation is vital. We have learned from our own experiences in Northern Ireland that building peace requires a comprehensive, sustained and joined-up effort. There is no quick fix. Establishing and maintaining momentum in the early stages, though, is critical. There has been steady progress, including on the legislative track with the amnesty law and special jurisprudence for peace, passed by Congress. I also welcome the report that 1,000 FARC weapons have already been taken off the battlefield. That has been made possible by the continued commitment of both the Government and the FARC to meeting the 180-day time frame.

I recognize that this has been an ambitious timeline and encourage both sides to continue to work towards the final goal of complete disarmament. In the meantime, it is important that visible steps be taken to deliver implementation in the transition zones, including the provision of health facilities. Amid the progress, we are concerned by the activity of non-State armed groups, including the National Liberation Army and criminal attacks against community leaders and human rights defenders, as verified by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights reports in March. These attacks are a threat to public confidence in the peace agreement, especially in isolated and vulnerable communities. A robust, coordinated response from the Government is needed to ensure security in all areas vacated by the FARC, and I welcome efforts taken so far, including the establishment of the commission on security guarantees, which I very much hope will cooperate effectively with civil society.

In the coming months, politics in Colombia will increasingly focus on next year's presidential and legislative elections. No one doubts the commitments of both parties to achieve peace but, during the election period, it will be crucial that work continue on the structures and mechanisms needed for the long-term reintegration of the FARC and the development of areas affected by the conflict. The Colombian Government should feel assured that the international community is ready to assist in any way it can with these efforts. As the penholder in the Security Council and as a witness to the handing over of the peace agreement to the Secretary-General two weeks ago, the United Kingdom stands ready to play our part.

We also look forward to the Council's visit in May, which will give us a clear sense of progress and demonstrate our continued support for peace in Colombia.

Finally, before giving up the floor, I would like to say that, as we meet today, we should reflect not just on the positive developments that Colombia has seen in recent months, but also on the positive role that the Council has played in bringing that progress about. That is a role that we do not play with respect to every single issue on our agenda. I hope that Colombia gives us all in this chamber increased hope and belief in the power of the Security Council to deliver peace and security. Furthermore, I hope that we can channel this spirit into the other difficult issues that we face.

Mr. Skau (Sweden) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset I wish, on behalf of the Government of Sweden, to express our sincerest condolences to the Government and people of Colombia with respect to the tragic loss of life in Putumayo. We stand with Ambassador Mejía Vélez at this difficult time. Our embassy in Bogotá and the Swedish Government are ready to assist in every way possible. I also want to extend my most sincere personal condolences.

Almost 20 years ago, I lived in Putumayo working for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. I have spent a great deal of time in the city of Mocoa and have dear friends there. Consequently, I know that the people will face this tremendous challenge with their incomparable human spirit — the Colombian spirit.

(*spoke in English*)

Turning to the topic of today's meeting, I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2017/252) and Special Representative of the Secretary-General Jean Arnault for his briefing. Sweden has a long-standing commitment to peace in Colombia and strongly supports the work of the United Nations Mission in Colombia.

We commend the firm commitment of the Government of Colombia and the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia — Ejército del Pueblo to the peace process, and their continuous efforts to overcome challenges to the full implementation of the peace agreement. In that regard, we welcome the recent adoption by the Colombian senate on the Special Jurisdiction for Peace in Colombia, which will be crucial to the further implementation of the Final Peace Agreement. Those historic steps forward are a testament to the resilience of the peace process and the commitment of the parties.

We particularly welcome the strong focus on child protection and the full engagement of women in the peace agreement in Colombia. It serves as a model for other peace processes. The agreement sets child-centred guiding principles, with a focus on the treatment of separated children as victims, a gender-sensitive approach and family and community-based reintegration. The full and active inclusion of women in the peace process and the inclusion of women's groups in its implementation, will also help ensure that this gender-sensitive approach is maintained.

The peace agreement marked a new beginning for Colombia. The international community must stand behind a committed and sustained effort to support the peace process, so that it can rapidly deliver tangible peace dividends for the people of Colombia. Now is a unique moment for peace in Colombia and an opportunity that must not be missed.

Mr. Delattre (France) (*spoke in French*): I would like to begin by once again conveying our deep solidarity with Colombia following the tragic events in the Mocoa region. The death toll now stands at almost 300. President Hollande immediately offered his condolences to President Santos and the people of Colombia. We have indicated our readiness to provide any assistance upon the request of the Colombian Government. I remind my Colombian colleague, who has acted commendably, that we stand by the people of Colombia now, more than ever, in the face of this terrible ordeal.

I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Jean Arnault, for his illuminating briefing and his exemplary commitment, as well as that of his teams. Naturally, he can count on the full support of France and the other members of the Security Council, I would venture.

France fully supports the courageous peace process led by President Santos. That is the central message that President Hollande conveyed when he was in Colombia in January. During that trip, he and his Colombian counterpart visited one of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia — Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP) demobilization zone. We once again welcome the parties' unshakeable desire to bring about peace and their full compliance with the ceasefire since the signing of the peace agreement. Their determination to close that chapter after more than 50 years of conflict shows that peace is always possible, regardless of what obstacles must be overcome.

For all of us in the Security Council, which has dealt with numerous crises all over the world, this is a source of hope and encouragement. France will do its part in working for the consolidation of peace in Colombia. French aid stands at around €820 million in gifts and loans linked to post-conflict initiatives, primarily in the areas of rural development, land governance and demining. We also directly contributed €3 million to the European Union Trust Fund. We are encouraged by the measures taken by the parties with regard to the implementation of the peace agreement. The FARC-EP's movement to demobilization zones and the surrender of the first weapons to the United Nations are major steps in the establishment of lasting peace in Colombia. We warmly welcome those developments.

We hope that, with the commitment and will of all, the 180-day deadline for the full surrender of FARC-EP weapons to the United Nations will be met. With the effective launching of the demobilization process, the implementation of the peace agreement is entering a critical phase. In that regard, it is essential not to underestimate the challenges that will be encountered in the transition to lasting peace and to create as soon as possible the necessary conditions for peacefully reintegrating those who are demobilized. Specifically, that will require the ability to offer prospects of socioeconomic reintegration to ex-combattants through development of zones affected by the conflict and the expeditious implementation of legal and security guarantees stipulated in the peace agreement.

The noted trend of attacks and intimidation during the past few months against community leaders and human rights activists is a cause for concern. We know that the Colombian authorities are committed to take all necessary measures to respond to that situation.

Finally, we are pleased to see that the United Nations is doing its part in supporting the process, at the request of the parties. The deployment of the Mission on time is good news. It will enable the Mission to participate actively in the work of the tripartite Monitoring and Verification Mechanism as it relates to the ceasefire, and to coordinate the process of the FARC-EP surrendering their weapons. It shows that the United Nations can live up to those expectations. We are only too pleased.

The Security Council's upcoming visit to Colombia next week will be yet another example of our mobilization on that issue and of our unanimous will to doing whatever is necessary to meet the needs of the parties by providing them effective support along their path towards lasting peace.

Mr. Llorentty Solíz (Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I want to echo the sentiments of my colleagues by conveying the solidarity of Bolivia with the Government and the people of the Republic of Colombia for the hundreds of people killed, injured or affected by flooding, overflowing of rivers and landslides in Mocoa, Putumayo.

As my Government has expressed, we are naturally at the disposal of our brothers and sisters in Colombia to provide needed help in this difficult time. We welcome the distinguished Permanent Representative of Colombia, Ambassador Mariana Mejía. I also wish to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Mission in Colombia, Mr. Jean Arnault, for having shared the Secretary-General's report (S/2017/252) with the Security Council, as well as for his efforts and capable leadership in this delicate matter.

In the period Mr. Arnault spoke of, we witnessed historic moments for the world and particularly for Latin America and the Caribbean, in the framework of the peace process between the Government of Colombia and the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia — Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP). The first days of February, we saw more than 6,000 FARC-EP guerillas mobilizing towards the zones and points — when we witnessed the imminent beginning of the path towards peace, which Colombia has sought for almost five decades.

One month later, the FARC-EP began to surrender their weapons. To date, one thousand weapons have been turned in and nearly all of the weapons in the zones have been registered and marked by the United Nations. We are currently in one of the most complicated phases of the peace process — which requires the understanding of the parties in addressing unforeseen problems that may arise — but there is no doubt that the Colombian Government and the FARC-EP are committed to the peace process. I recall the words of President Evo Morales, who stated that,

> "everyone knows that this peace process has not been easy and maintaining it will require just as much effort as it took to achieve it".

In that regard, we welcome the communiqué issued by the Government and the FARC-EP, following the joint meeting held on 26 March, during which the first 100 days following the implementation of the Final Peace Agreement were assessed. Six key points, which should be highlighted here today, were raised at that meeting.

First, with regard to prioritizing the standards required for the implementation of the final agreement, we would like to highlight efforts to promote the enactment of a comprehensive rural development law, which would address one of the root causes of conflict by eradicating abject poverty in rural areas, ensuring the protection of land and property rights and promoting quality, inter alia. The second point refers to the implementation of a national political pact that would ban the use of weapons in the political arena. The third point relates to transforming the FARC-EP into a legal political party, including militias. The fourth point covers the implementation of an amnesty law, which is a key issue, as well as reintegration with a view to providing economic and social security for members of the FARC, once the legalization process has been concluded. We believe that that is a vital point in the peace process. We encourage the implementation of projects that would allow FARC members to return to civilian life. The fifth point relates to the Government's commitment to ensuring the return of all infrastructure to the veredas by the end of this month, such as basic services, medical equipment and ambulances for each area. The sixth and final point references adhering to the timeline for the laying down of weapons.

We welcome the establishment of the national commission on security guarantees. We hope that it will greatly assist in reducing the number of violent acts committed against civil society and community leaders in affected areas. We call for the redoubling of efforts to ensure their personal safety and the full enjoyment of their civil and political rights. Similarly, we welcome the signature of decrees to establish a committee for truth and unity in the quest for missing persons.

We also welcome the appointment of former Presidents José Alberto "Pepe" Mujica Cordano and Felipe González Márquez as supervisors of the international component of the Commission for the Follow-up, Promotion and Verification of the Implementation of the Final Agreement. In line with those parameters, we would like to convey to the Security Council and the United Nations Mission in Colombia our ongoing support for the commitments made by the parties. We would like to highlight the support provided by the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States to the sister Republic of Colombia and to the United Nations Mission, which Bolivia proudly assists with a large number of observers.

We note the observations made by the Secretary-General in his report. We acknowledge the important work the United Nations conducts in the country. As mentioned earlier, there are some logistical and administrative challenges, which we are sure will be overcome gradually. In that regard, we thank the United Nations Mission team for its support, as well as the United Nations Development Programme in Colombia. We eagerly await the Security Council's visit to Colombia in May.

Once again, as has been done so often in the Chamber while addressing this very important topic, I would like to pay tribute to a man who described himself as someone who conspired for peace in Colombia — renowned author Gabriel García Márquez. As he received the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1982, he stated that neither floods nor plagues, famines nor cataclysms, nor even the eternal wars of century upon century, have been able to subdue the persistent advantage of life over death.

Mr. Rosselli (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): Although the Government of Uruguay has already conveyed its sympathy directly to the Government of Colombia, once again, it extends the solidarity and condolences of the people of Uruguay to Ambassador María Mejía Vélez, following the tragedy in Putumayo.

I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General Mr. Jean Arnault for his comprehensive briefing and, above all, for the work he and his team are conducting in Colombia.

Our statement today aims to reiterate Uruguay's encouragement to and support of the peace process in Colombia and its principal protagonists — the Government, the people of Colombia and the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia — Ejército del Pueblo. We continue to reiterate that for us, they have shown and continue to show a commitment to peace and are persistent in conveying a message of hope to the international community — where there is a will, objectives can be achieved in spite of the many difficulties that may be encountered along the way. That is why we are taking the initiative, during our presidency of the Security Council next month, to have the members of the Security Council visit Colombia from 3 to 5 May as a demonstration of our direct support to all those taking part in the peace process and trust in their work. It also serves to send a clear signal about the importance that the Council has given to its commitment to support the peace process and provide monitoring through the establishment of the United Nations Mission in Colombia.

Some months ago, we said that the peace talks and the signing of the Final Peace Agreement were the easy part of the process; the hard part started the day after the agreement was signed. We are guided on the path ahead by the resolute will of the parties and by our support of and commitment to the peace process. We would like to point out that we believe that both the report of the Secretary-General (S/2017/252) and Mr. Arnault's briefing are very encouraging. They show that, in spite of the challenges in various areas, considerable progress has been made in implementing the peace agreement. We believe that the role of the Commission for the Follow-up, Promotion and Verification of the Implementation of the Final Agreement, which is made up of three Government representatives and three FARC-EP representatives, is to supervise the implementation of the agreement within the deadlines set. We believe that progress should be achieved simultaneously in all sections of the agreement. It is therefore important to identify delays or flaws early in the implementation process.

We stress the vital importance of the promulgation of the amnesty law on 30 December 2016 and the decree for its enforcement on 17 February, the submission to Parliament on 1 February of a draft bill on the political reintegration of the FARC-EP and the adoption by Congress of the legislative bill on the Comprehensive System of Truth, Justice, Reparations and Non-repetition, including a Special Jurisdiction for Peace. That system of transitional justice is a fundamental component of the peace agreement and that is why we stress the need for ongoing legislative adjustment.

The Mission has continued to make progress in its work. We have been informed that during the reporting period, the Government, the FARC-EP and the Mission have cooperated effectively at the national, regional and local levels. We note, inter alia, that communication strategies have improved and there has been progress in finding solutions to logistical problems and in providing medical care. We call on the parties to redouble their efforts to solve the logistical challenges that remain a source of concern, such as insecurity in rural areas, which are greatly affected by the conflict due to their links to the illegal economy, violence against human rights defenders and the reintegration of members of the FARC-EP into the civilian, economic, social and political life of the country.

Uruguay pays particular attention to the rights of women, children and vulnerable social groups. We welcome the implementation of the protocol for the separation of minors from the ranks of the FARC-EP and the launch of a reintegration programme, with the support of the Red Cross, UNICEF, the International Organization for Migration and Colombia's Presidential Council for Human Rights.

Lastly, we welcome the joint communiqué issued on 26 March by the Government of Colombia and the FARC, in which they reported on the meeting held to evaluate the 100 days of the implementation of the Peace Agreement, especially as it relates to the laying down of weapons and the status of gathering areas for FARC-EP members, including their reintegration into civilian life. That exercise in assessing the implementation of reciprocal obligations contributes to building confidence between the parties and to cohesion within the FARC-EP, as well as reassuring those who might feel threatened or whose expectations are diminished. To all those involved, we are confident that their perseverance will result in the successful conclusion of the peace process.

Mr. Bessho (Japan): First of all, I would like to welcome Ambassador María Emma Mejía Vélez to the Chamber. Japan offers its deep condolences to the people of Colombia on the tragedy caused by the terrible landslide and flooding. As a nation that often suffers from such tragedies, we express our deep sympathy and solidarity with the people of Colombia.

I thank Mr. Jean Arnault, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Colombia, for his informative updates. Japan is very encouraged that under his leadership the United Nations Mission in Colombia is laying a solid foundation for a successful peace process. Japan appreciates his commitment and dedication.

In reiterating Japan's full support to the people of Colombia, I will focus on three points today.

First, we welcome the fact that the peace process is largely on track. We commend the efforts and firm commitment of all parties, which constitute the most important part of the peace process. Keeping in mind the result of the referendum held in October 2016, we hope that the overall success of these early stages will contribute to a firm national consensus towards the Peace Agreement.

Secondly, it is important that the Council be united in its commitment to this issue. In that regard, the Security Council's visit next month will be an important opportunity to convey to the parties the Council's strong commitment to the peace process in Colombia and its support for the implementation of the Final Peace Agreement.

Thirdly, the presence and the role of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General is vital in bridging gaps between the parties and in reducing mistrust. We fully support the work of Special Representative Arnault, and particularly urge him to ensure the successful completion of the laying down of arms. It is important that this effort succeed in order to secure ustained peace in Colombia.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate Japan's firm commitment to supporting Colombia's efforts towards peace.

Mr. Zhang Dianbin (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Mr. Jean Arnault, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Colombia, for his briefing.

On behalf of China, I would like to express our sincere condolences to Colombia with regard to the landslide that resulted in major casualties and loss of property. China immediately provided humanitarian assistance to the Government of Colombia, and we believe that the Colombian Government and its people will overcome this disaster and rebuild their homes.

With the joint efforts of the Government of Colombia and the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC), the implementation of the Peace Agreement has been proceeding smoothly in general.

First, about 7,000 FARC members have reached the transitory normalization zones smoothly and they are beginning to lay down their arms.

Secondly, the Government of Colombia and FARC are firmly committed to the ceasefire and no violations have been observed.

Thirdly, both parties have committed to completing the process of surrendering their weapons in the next three months. Once again, that demonstrates the determination of the Government of Colombia and the FARC to jointly take forward the peace process. That has a lot to do with the robust assistance provided by the United Nations Mission in Colombia, led by Special Representative Arnault. China appreciates the efforts by the Government of Colombia and all the other parties concerned. The internal domestic war in Colombia lasted for half a century. Healing the traumas of war is not an easy task. The leaders of the FARC have committed to transforming the FARC into a political party and to laying down arms within a specific timeline. At the same time, FARC hopes that the Government will provide concrete assurances in terms of justice, security, logistics and reintegration.

We hope that the Government of Colombia and the FARC will strengthen their cooperation to ensure the comprehensive implementation of the Peace Agreement. China hopes that the international community, especially countries in the region, will continue to provide support to the peace process in Colombia, help increase mutual trust between the Government and the FARC, strengthen their coordination and accelerate the early completion of the surrender of weapons. We hope that the United Nations Mission in Colombia and other United Nations agencies will, on the basis of respect for the sovereignty and the independent territorial integrity of Colombia, exhibit impartiality — the principle of equity — to enhance cooperation with the Government of Colombia and the FARC and to facilitate the peace process. China supports the efforts of the Government of Colombia in taking forward the peace process and supports the United Nations Mission in Colombia in the continued implementation of its mandate.

The Security Council is to visit Colombia in early May, which China welcomes. We expect to learn about the situation there through this field visit. We believe it will help take forward the peace process towards greater development and the achievement an lasting peace in Colombia at an early date.

Mr. Cardi (Italy): At the outset, as others have done, on behalf of the Government of Italy, I would like to express, through Ambassador María Emma Mejía Vélez, my deepest condolences to the people and the Government of Colombia for the victims of the landslide in the city of Mocoa, which left more than 260 dead and many more missing or injured. Italy immediately activated emergency funding to contribute to international assistance efforts.

I would also like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Colombia and the Secretary-General himself for their report (S/2017/252) and for their efforts in fulfilling the mandate of the United Nations Mission in Colombia. Allow me to make three brief remarks.

First, we strongly support the Final Peace Agreement and commend the firm commitment of the parties to finally bring to an end to the decades-long conflict. The historical process we are witnessing would have been unthinkable without the ownership and leadership of the Colombian parties. We look forward to the Security Council mission in May to directly convey this message to the authorities and the people of Colombia.

Secondly, we encourage the parties to intensify their efforts to implement the Peace Agreement within the agreed deadline. It is important not to lose the momentum. In that respect, we welcome the commitment of the parties to complete the surrender and registration of weapons within the agreed timeline. We also welcome the measures established by the Peace Agreement on legal, security and socioeconomic issues related to reintegration.

Thirdly, reconciliation and reintegration are the cornerstones of a durable and sustainable settlement. They are a precondition to build confidence, to generate an inclusive political dialogue and to bring the concrete dividends of peace to the populations in terms of security and improved living conditions. We are aware of the challenges ahead and stand ready to assist the Government and the parties in this endeavour, both bilaterally and at the international level.

In that regard, Italy firmly supports the European Union action for post-conflict stabilization and development in Colombia, including through the European Union Trust Fund for Colombia, to which we have contributed €3 million. I also recall our long-standing contribution to United Nations Mine Action Service programmes on humanitarian de-mining and peacebuilding and to Organization of American States activities on mine-risk education, psychological assistance and rehabilitation of the victims.

I would like to conclude by commending the efforts made by the authorities for protecting and assisting women and children involved in the conflict, as also recognized by the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict in its recently adopted conclusions on the situation of children and armed conflict in Colombia.

Mr. Yelchenko (Ukraine): I would like to begin by expressing my heartfelt condolences to the families of the victims of the devastating flood and landslide in Mocoa, which left hundreds of people dead, injured or missing.

I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Mission in Colombia, Mr. Jean Arnault, for his update.

Ukraine reiterates its support for Colombia's efforts in implementing the Final Peace Agreement in accordance with resolutions 2261 (2016) and 2307 (2016). We recognize the challenges the country faces in making the transition from a conflict to a post-conflict environment. It is now essential that the open dialogue that led to the Agreement continue.

In February, we observed historic images as thousands of members of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias the Colombia moved into transition zones where they are starting their reintegration into new lives. Moving nearly 7,000 fighters to such zones was not an easy task; indeed, it constitutes an example of the real commitment of the parties to tackling outstanding difficulties head-on.

In the light of that, we encourage the parties to maintain their positive cooperation and momentum for the benefit of all Colombians. All political forces and all sectors of Colombian society should be actively engaged in this crucial endeavour. Broader unity around the Peace Agreement is indispensable to achieving the Agreement's goals with regard to ceasefire and the laying down of arms, as well as rural reform, combating illicit drugs and expanding political participation. While moving ahead with the peace process in all its complexity, it is also important to keep in focus the needs and best interests of children affected by conflict, as well as a gender perspective.

The cases of violence against human rights defenders mentioned in the Secretary-General's recent report (S/2017/252) are of concern. We believe that the end of impunity is crucial to ensuring comprehensive peace in the country. In that regard, we take positive note of the recent legislation, including the amnesty law passed last December and the law establishing the Comprehensive System of Truth, Justice, Reparations and Non-repetition, approved by Congress on 13 March.

We commend international efforts in support of implementation of the Peace Agreement, in particular those States Members of the United Nations that have provided observers for the United Nations Mission, as well as the role played by the guarantors and supporting countries during the peace process. The Security Council should continue to back parties as they advance in implementing the provisions of the Final Peace Agreement.

We look forward to the Security Council's visit to Colombia next month so as to better appreciate the aspirations and concerns of the parties. On the other hand, such a visit will demonstrate the Council's full commitment to long-lasting peace in Colombia. We hope that the Colombian experience of engaging the United Nations as the international component of the tripartite mechanism will become an illustrative success story for the region and beyond.

Mr. Seck (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): I thank you, Madam President, for having convened today's meeting, and especially for having invited our colleague Ms. María Emma Mejía Vélez, which gives me an opportunity to renew the sincere condolences of the Senegalese people to the people of Colombia after the catastrophic natural disaster in the form of the earthquake and mudslides that took place in Mocoa on 2 April, leading to the loss of many lives and much property damage.

I would also like to thank Mr. Jean Arnault, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Mission in Colombia, for the clarity of his presentation and his tireless efforts. Under Mr. Arnault's leadership, the Mission has already proved to be effective and productive, especially when it comes to the coordination of the tripartite Monitoring and Verification Mechanism and the provision of support for the demilitarization of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias the Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP).

Senegal is pleased at the major progress made, despite delays, in the implementation of the Final Peace Agreement between the Government of Colombia and the FARC, which put an end to an armed conflict that lasted over 50 years. The Colombian people owes this progress to both the Government and the FARC as a result of their efforts to accelerate the implementation of commitments made in the framework of the Peace Agreement. The list of clear-minded, courageous constitutional, legislative, institutional and other measures taken and implemented since the beginning of the peace process, the most recent of which the Special Representative mentioned in his briefing, is a long one. I will therefore not dwell on them, but rather go directly to my point.

Senegal commends the fact that the ceasefire and the cessation of hostilities are still holding and that no casualties have been reported, which eloquently reflects the parties' strong determination to keep to the 180-day timeline established by the Peace Agreement, despite the delay, for completing the laying down of arms. In addition, we welcome the FARC-EP's renewed commitment to transform itself into a political party, as well as the commitment of its leader, Rodrigo Londoño, that the group will not field candidates in the 2018 presidential election, in order to foster national consensus around a candidate that guarantees the continued implementation of the Final Peace Agreement. That is important.

The process of the laying down of arms, which began on 1 March, is an important step in the implementation of the Peace Agreement. As of 11 March, the commission for the Monitoring and Verification Mechanism reported a number of weapons handed over. However, we remain concerned about the actions of certain non-State armed groups that have taken over some of the areas evacuated by the FARC and are competing for control of illegal activities, including illegal mining, drug trafficking or other activities, thereby establishing a climate of insecurity marked by attacks and acts of intimidation that unfortunately target members of civil society and human rights defenders. We denounce and condemn those practices.

It is important that the security gap created by the departure of FARC combatants be rapidly filled. The desertion of several FARC fighters in the south-eastern and Pacific coast regions, some 2 to 5 per cent of their former membership, is also a matter of deep concern.

The progress I just referred to must be accompanied by constant support for the Commission for the Follow-up, Promotion and Verification of the Implementation of the Final Agreement, made up of the High Commissioner for Peace, the Minister of the Interior and the Minister Counsellor for Post-Conflict, as well as three high-level members of FARC-EP. It is also true that at this stage of the process of implementation of the agreements, in order to overcome the delay previously noted, efforts need to be redoubled and concentrated in terms of building FARC-EP camps, together with the necessary communities, the security of FARC ex-combatants and their reintegration into society as a political party and as participants in the economic fabric of the country.

In conclusion, Senegal wishes to reaffirm its support for and commitment to peace in Colombia, with the reasonable hope that the Peace Agreement and the support of the international community will make it possible to put an end to a conflict that has lasted all too long. Mr. Arnault was correct in saying that the upcoming visit of the Security Council to Colombia that is planned for May under the South American presidency of Uruguay is a very timely one.

Mr. Iliichev (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We wish to echo the words of condolence expressed by other speakers and convey them to the people and the Government of Colombia in the wake of the natural disaster in Mocoa. We extend our sympathy to the families of those who died, and we hope that the joint efforts of the Government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) in order to address the consequences of the flood and the landslide will translate into the process of national reconciliation and advancement of the peace process.

We are grateful to Mr. Jean Arnault for his briefing. We note that progress has been made in the peace process in Colombia and hope that both sides will fulfil their commitments faithfully and in a timely manner, which is particularly important in this case.

We support the activities of the United Nations Mission in Colombia, which oversees the disarmament and reintegration processes. We welcome the guerrillas' political confirmation of their intent to disarm in line with the timeline. We believe that the incentive that guides the FARC in this process is the possibility of achieving their political ambitions in the upcoming 2018 election campaign.

We take a positive view of the Colombian Parliament's speedy passage of laws aimed at creating a legal basis for the peace process, including the laws on amnesty and the transitional justice system. This step and future ones to be taken within the framework of the peace process should provide a solid foundation for national reconciliation and future post-conflict changes in Colombia.

We are, however, concerned by indications that certain difficulties exist in terms of the Government's discharging its obligations, a situation that could have a negative impact on the disarmament process. The deterioration of the guerrillas' socioeconomic situation owing to shortcomings on the part of the Government could result in uncontrolled desertions from FARC. As the Council is aware, to date already about 500 people have stated that they will not follow the orders of the guerrilla leadership. These people are highly trained armed fighters and will inevitably join different criminal groups, which could lead to a new spiral of violence in the country. We hope that the current difficulties are only temporary and that the Government will do everything in its power to overcome them.

In that regard, we welcome the decision taken by the President of the country, Mr. Santos, to send members of his cabinet to FARC camps in order to assess the arrangements made there for FARC members who support the peace process. Future steps to be taken by the United Nations to promote the peace process can be undertaken once the relevant parameters have been agreed with the Government of Colombia and FARC.

The report of the Secretary-General (S/2017/252) does not contain any recommendations on an eventual second mission in Colombia. Neither Bogotá or the guerrillas have taken a position on this issue. In general, our view is that we should avoid endowing the mission with excessive powers and thereby turning it into an external watchdog with respect to the activities of the sovereign Colombian Government.

We still need to determine whether the parties and the United Nations will be able to conclude the disarmament and demobilization process within the set timeline and what the security conditions will be when the mandate of the current Mission expires. Obviously, at that time we will be discussing reductions in the military and police components. However, when we take that decision, we must ensure that the withdrawal of all observers does not lead to a security vacuum. We in turn intend to continue to fully support the peace process in Colombia.

Mr. Umarov (Kazakhstan): I wish to greet the Permanent Representative of Colombia in this Chamber and also to join others in expressing our heartfelt condolences to the people of Colombia on the tragic landslide in Mocoa.

I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Jean Arnault, for his briefing and for the effective contribution made by the United Nations Mission in Colombia to the peace process in the country. We welcome the many positive developments that have been witnessed. My delegation wishes to make the following observations and recommendations with a view to furthering the peace process.

The Colombian Constitutional Court will need to improve the revised peace agreement adopted by the Congress for it to take effect as soon as possible. We commend the formation of the transitional justice tribunal, the truth commission and the missing persons search unit to redress the grievances of the 8 million victims. The amnesty law ratified by President Santos should result in further bills and pardons, with measures for the demobilization and disarmament of some 7,000 Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia-People's Army (FARC-EP) rebels.

The process of the laying down of weapons must be rigorously carried out in the 26 demobilization camps. Thus the active coordination of the tripartite Monitoring and Verification Mechanism, consisting of the United Nations, the Government and FARC, will accelerate the process of full and effective disarmament, demobilization and reintegration. Equally important is the peaceful reintegration of former FARC rebels into society. At the same time, we must ensure that all parties to the peace process strictly comply not only with the provisions of the peace agreement but also with international humanitarian law.

We encourage the Government to continue negotiations with the largest left-wing rebel group, the National Liberation Army, with a view to ending the confrontation. We are concerned that the National Liberation Army is continuing to commit acts of violence that destabilize the country, hence we urge that a bilateral ceasefire agreement be concluded at the very earliest.

We need a vision of peace that is truly bottom-up, one that endeavours to break the vicious circle of violence and leads to a true institutional strengthening and the protection of peoples' rights. The country has lost years of potential progress, and it is thus critical to create an adequate socioeconomic structure that is able to support this young democracy. The private sector has inputs to make and must unite with the public sector to move Colombia forward.

It is clear that a post-conflict Colombia will pose challenges and offer opportunities. Job creation and the establishment of infrastructure and State services such as schools and hospitals in former guerrilla strongholds will narrow the wide gap between rural and urban areas. In addition, dismantling organized-crime networks will have to remain a priority.

Achieving peace in Colombia is critical to achieving a more stable world. Such a commitment is necessary, together with that of the United Nations system and regional organizations, especially the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, in assisting Colombia with the reform process.

Finally, the ceasefire is still fragile, but the future of Colombia holds the promise of progress. Kazakhstan will work with the United Nations and other Member States to overcome challenges and to build a peace that lives up to the aspirations of the Colombian nation and the world. We look forward to visiting Columbia in May to attest to our strong support for the peace process in the country.

Ms. Guadey (Ethiopia): I would like to begin by offering the sincere condolences of Ethiopia to Ambassador María Mejía Vélez following the death and destruction caused by the landslide in Colombia this past weekend. We are in sympathy and solidarity with the families of the victims as well as with the people and the Government of Colombia.

Let me also join others in expressing our thanks to Special Representative of the Secretary-General Arnault for his briefing on the latest report of the Secretary-General on Colombia (S/2017/252) and the activities of the United Nations Mission in Colombia over the past three months.

The significant developments that have taken place in the process of the implementation of the peace agreement, including the disarmament of former combatants of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), which started recently, is very encouraging, as is the bilateral ceasefire and the cessation of hostilities between the Government and the FARC, which has been holding with no casualties registered. Of course, we understand that this is only the beginning of a long and arduous process, and we take note of some of the difficult and sensitive issues involved which need to be handled carefully, including the amnesty law, reintegration and the transformation of FARC into a political party, as highlighted in the report of the Secretary-General. We also recognize the potential complications ahead in relation to the upcoming general elections due to take place in May 2018.

This notwithstanding, the progress made recently has been remarkable, leading to a renewed sense of hope and optimism for lasting peace in Colombia. Both parties deserve to be commended for reaffirming their political will and commitment to advancing the implementation the Peace Agreement. It is imperative that the parties continue to stay the course and that the positive momentum generated recently be sustained so as to achieve the difficult transition to peace. The parties certainly need the continued support of the international community, with full respect for the peace process by the parties and by the Colombian people in general. In that regard, we reiterate our appreciation to the countries of the region and other international partners that continue to closely support the implementation of the Peace Agreement.

The role of the United Nations Mission in Colombia continues to be very important, and we are pleased to note that the Mission has reached its full operational capacity. We express our appreciation to Special Representative of the Secretary-General Arnault as well as the United Nations personnel in Colombia for all their efforts to supporting the Peace Agreement.

Finally, we look forward to our visit to Colombia next month, which will afford us an opportunity to express support for, and solidarity with, Colombia and to convey a strong message of encouragement to the parties for their commitment to implement to the Peace Agreement.

Mr. Moustafa (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to join my colleagues in expressing our condolences to the Government and the people of Colombia on the hundreds of Colombian lives claimed by the landslide.

I would like also to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for his comprehensive briefing. I have three brief points to make.

First, my delegation commends the efforts of the two parties to the Final Peace Agreement and the reaffirmation of their commitment to abide by the timelines specified by the Agreement, despite the logistical issues that have led to relative delays. In in that regard, we welcome the successful cantonment of combatants in the agreed-upon zones. We believe that the next phase should focus on efforts to reintegrate members of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia into Colombian society.

Secondly, we commend the efforts and positive and effective steps taken by the Government of Colombia in implementing the Peace Agreement, in particular with regard to legislation aimed at prosecuting the perpetrators of crimes committed during the conflict, as well as the establishment of other entities, including the Monitoring and Verification Mechanism to follow up on the implementation of the Peace Agreement and, in particular the special electoral mission that will monitor ensuring participation in political life.

Thirdly, and lastly, we hope that the two parties will overcome their differences with regard to the implementation of the Peace Agreement. That includes committedly respecting the agreed timelines. In that regard, we hope that the Security Council's visit during Uruguay's presidency in May will provide impetus for the Peace Agreement in Colombia and its implementation. That would reflect international support for the Agreement.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of the United States.

I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Arnault for his briefing.

Americans are grieving today along with Colombians for the lives lost in the terrible mudslides this past weekend. We express our heartfelt condolences to the people of Colombia who were affected by that tragedy.

Special Representative Arnault is playing a critical role in supporting the implementation of the historic Final Peace Agreement.

As my colleagues know, we have begun a review of United Nations peacekeeping missions. Although the Colombia Mission is not a peacekeeping mission, the same principles of effectiveness and accountability apply. To be effective, missions must have a solid political foundation on which to build. They must enjoy the cooperation of the host countries. They must have clear realistic goals with identifiable exit strategies. And we as a body must be able to adjust those missions to fit new realities.

I want to congratulate the Monitoring and Verification Mechanism in Colombia for meeting those and additional criteria. The Mission has all the pieces in place for a successful outcome. It has a carefully designed mandate to support a clear and established peace process. It also has a clear deadline for the demobilization and disarmament of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC). In that regard, I was pleased to hear that both sides are working together towards the implementation of the Peace Agreement as quickly as possible. We are thankful for both the process that they have established and the cooperation that they have achieved. We urge both sides to build on that momentum so as to move forward more quickly.

As the Security Council looks forward to continuing its support for Colombia through monitoring the next stage of the peace process, we must keep in mind the principles of effectiveness that the Council has developed. I believe that those are the building blocks of continued success in achieving lasting peace. Lasting peace in Colombia means that the Government will need to extend its authority throughout the entire State. All parties must now work with the Government to make that happen. It is no secret that, as the FARC move into demobilization zones, they leave behind remote, lawless areas that have been largely untouched by the Colombian Government. The political vacuum that that has created is a dangerous threat to long-term peace. It must be filled before other armed groups, including drug traffickers, step in.

To that end, the United States continues to enjoy strong cooperation with Colombia in combating drug trafficking. We are providing assistance to the Government in fulfilling the Peace Agreement so as to end Colombia's illicit drug problem. We hope and expect that progress will continue. As we have discussed today, much good has been done, but much more remains to be done.

During the time during which I have been here, I have learned that moments of hope and promise are truly moments to be savoured. For Colombia, this is one of those moments. The United States stands with Colombia in building lasting peace for its citizens.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the representative of Colombia.

Ms. Mejía Vélez (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to thank you, Madam President, and all the members of the Security Council for the expression of solidarity made on behalf of the people of Macoa, a very harsh jungle region that has suffered a tragedy that none of us could have anticipated to befall them.

I would like to congratulate you, Madam President, and your country on assuming the presidency of the Security Council, and I wish you great success in conducting the work of the Council this month. I also thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Jean Arnault, and his entire team, because as members of the Council have indicated and have seen first-hand, we have established a level of coordination that, I believe, is very valuable and essential for the work being done.

I would like to read out something of great interest to us Colombians that the Secretary-General indicated in his report,

> "Colombia's remarkable journey towards peace has continued. The images witnessed in February of thousands of FARC-EP members making their final march into the zones where they will begin their reintegration into civilian life and FARC-EP will transform into a political organization were images of peace that many Colombians thought they would never see. These historic steps forward, as part of a comprehensive peace agreement, are testament to the resilience of the peace process and the commitment of the parties." *(S/2017/252, para. 75)*

And the numbers are proof of this. The past seven months have seen violence de-escalating at unprecedented rates in a nation that for more than 50 years dealt with a brutal internal conflict with enormous human costs. Those numbers include 1,546 days without any attacks on communities, 580 without kidnappings, 375 without assaults on public law enforcement and 307 without any incidents attributed to the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC). The homicide rate for the first quarter of this year is 12 per cent below last year's.

There is no question that there have been some worrying events, which we will have to address going forward, but as of today, we have fully registered 8,345 FARC-Ejército del Pueblo guerrillas and militias and more than 7,000 weapons that have been registered by the United Nations. Fifty-seven minors have been separated from the FARC so far, and the process is continuing. As the Special Representative said, on the legislative front we have also made progress on transitional justice, and yesterday President Santos Calderón signed decrees on the establishment of the Truth Commission and a special unit to search for persons who have disappeared, as part of the development of an integral system of justice, truth and reparation.

I would like to highlight two elements that I believe are important for the United Nations Mission in Colombia, because they could serve as examples for other missions in future. The first is that it has achieved a 20 per cent rate of participation of women, both military and civilian — currently the highest of any mission. That, together with the presence of a woman as Deputy Special Representative, Ms. Tania Patriota of Brazil, reinforces the strong gender dimension that has been present throughout the peace process and now in its implementation, where women are a strong presence in the ex-combatant component. The second is the regional component, where the members of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States have shown the extraordinarily important part that the presence of regional mechanisms has played in settling the last remaining conflict in the American hemisphere.

I should like to highlight the confidence of the national authorities and the international community in the ceasefire and disarmament process, thanks in large part to the work of the highly innovative Monitoring and Verification Mechanism, composed of the Government, the FARC and the United Nations. My Government believes that, in order to guarantee the legitimacy and credibility of the Mechanism, permanent and effective coordination among its members is indispensable, in compliance with the protocols governing the ceasefire, the laying down of arms and the preparatory activities of the reintegration and transition to legality, which we hope will be swift. It will also be necessary, in conformity with the scheduled programme, for the Mission to expedite the procedures for registration, identification and collection of weapons, as well as procedures for locating and destroying unstable weapons and explosives, concerning which Mr. Arnault spoke earlier. The Government is ready to provide logistical and legal means to contribute to this work.

Lastly, with respect to the killings of recent months that are referred to in the report and have been cited by a number of Council members, the Colombian Government wishes to reiterate that it is premature to affirm that all such killings are associated with the work of defending human rights or the handiwork of criminal organizations that have succeeded paramilitary groups. The authorities have been able to observe that, although in some cases this is so, it is not possible at this time to generalize about the origin of these criminal actions, which shall not prevent our Government, aware of the harmful presence of outlaw actors, to move forward with relevant public safety actions.

I conclude by reiterating our appreciation and by saying that the commitment of Colombia to implementing the mandate of the United Nations Mission is producing concrete results, which the Council will have the opportunity to see first-hand on its trip in May. We strongly hope and trust that the progress will be obvious.

The President: There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers. Given that all Council members have spoken in the Chamber, and with their agreement, we will forgo moving to consultations this afternoon.

The meeting rose at 4.25 p.m.

United Nations S/PV.7917

Security Council

Seventy-second year

Provisional

7917th meeting

Thursday, 6 April 2017, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Mrs. Haley	(United States of America)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Llorentty Solíz
	China	Mr. Wu Haitao
	Egypt	Mr. Aboulatta
	Ethiopia	Mr. Alemu
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Italy	Mr. Cardi
	Japan	Mr. Bessho
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Umarov
	Russian Federation	Mr. Iliichev
	Senegal	Mr. Seck
	Sweden	Mr. Skoog
	Ukraine	Mr. Vitrenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Wilson
	Uruguay	Mr. Bermúdez

Agenda

The situation in Mali

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Mali (S/2017/271)

Letter dated 5 April 2017 from the SecretaryGeneral addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2017/285)

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The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Mali

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Mali (S/2017/271)

Letter dated 5 April 2017 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2017/285)

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Mali to participate in this meeting.

On behalf of the Council, I welcome His Excellency Mr. Abdoulaye Diop, Minister for Foreign Affairs, African Integration and International Cooperation of the Republic of Mali.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, to participate in this meeting. It is my pleasure to welcome Mr. Lacroix to the Council for the first time in his new capacity.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2017/271, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Mali, and document S/2017/285, which contains a letter dated 5 April 2017 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council

I now give the floor to Mr. Lacroix.

Mr. Lacroix: I thank you, Madam President, for welcoming me to the Council for the first time.

(*spoke in French*)

It is with great pleasure that I address the Security Council for the first time since my appointment at the head of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. In this regard, I wish to pay tribute to my predecessor, Mr. Hervé Ladsous, for his devotion and untiring efforts to the benefit of peace. Council members may rest assured that I will take up the challenges that have been entrusted to me with determination and conviction, and it is with great candour and transparency that I intend to work with the Security Council.

About two weeks ago, I had the opportunity, together with Mr. Hervé Ladsous, to visit Mali and speak with its authorities, including President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita; the members of the Government, including Minister Abdoulaye Diop; the international mediation team, led by Algeria; and the staff of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) and the United Nations country team, who are doing remarkable work under difficult conditions.

As underscored in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2017/271), which was submitted to the Council last month, positive progress has been made in the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation. Despite the despicable attack on the camp of the Operational Coordination Mechanism in Gao on 18 January, the operationalization of joint patrols in Gao have been taking place since 20 February. After Gao, Kidal and Ménaka, the Agreement Monitoring Committee announced the day before yesterday the establishment of interim authorities in Taoudenni and Timbuktu by 13 April. These developments point to the gradual return of State authority in northern Mali as a result of interim arrangements, and MINUSMA, through its good offices, is doing everything in its power to help parties achieve tangible results on the ground.

We must, however, ensure that the new authorities and joint units are provided with adequate resources to fulfil their political and security responsibilities and that basic services are quickly made available to the people. In addition, it is key that we clarify the duration of these interim arrangements in view of their late start, as well as the status of dissident groups vis-à-vis the Coordination des mouvements de l'Azawad (CMA) and the Platform within the framework of the monitoring mechanism. The Malian authorities have indicated to us that these issues are being discussed.

In this sense, the National Accord Conference, which ended on Sunday, 2 April, was a unique opportunity to bring together the various segments of the Malian population, as well as the signatory parties. Despite the delayed participation of some key actors, such as the Coordination of the Azawad Movements and the political opposition, Malians from various regions of the country were able to speak to each other for the first time since the crisis began in 2012. We hope that the progress made during these five days will serve as a basis for the drafting of a charter for peace, unity and national reconciliation and will enrich the process of constitutional review in accordance with the provisions of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation.

However, with the 2018 elections looming on the horizon and despite of the advances over the past few months, we cannot ignore the significant delays sustained and the fragility of the gains that have been made. Overall, the implementation of the Agreement is still slow. The national strategy on security sector reform is also not yet finalized. The criteria for integrating the combatants from the signatory groups have not yet been determined and the eight cantonment sites built by MINUSMA remain empty. Longer-term institutional and security reforms are needed, in particular with regard to the future of the reconstituted national army. This lack of clarity in the institutional framework hampers efforts on the ground and is not conducive to building a climate of trust between the parties. This situation is leading to a splintering of the security and political landscape and further complicates our work for peace. Therefore, it is more important than ever for MINUSMA to vigorously pursue its political role and support the peace process.

The security situation remains worrying. Attacks by terrorist groups continue and are becoming increasingly sophisticated. In that regard, I want to pay tribute to MINUSMA and in particular to the troops who have lost their lives while serving this operation. I also want to pay tribute to the memory of the French soldier in Operation Barkhane, who lost his life yesterday. As the Council knows, a new partnership, bringing together the most active terrorist groups in Mali, was created under the banner of Al-Qaida and under the leadership of Iyad ag Ghali, the leader of Ansar Eddine. Da'esh, meanwhile, is slowly making its presence known in the Sahelo-Saharan strip. This convergence of threats is particularly alarming in a context in which the presence of the State is weak and sometimes even non-existent, and in which the implementation of the peace agreement still has to be translated into tangible results on the ground.

In addition, the centre of the country remains the scene of intense tensions fueled by extremist groups that, defying the authority of the State, carry out targeted assassinations and force the closure of schools in some localities, depriving children of educaiton. In response to this situation, the Malian authorities have drawn up an integrated security plan for the central regions, which I welcome. This multidimensional approach is necessary and welcome, and MINUSMA will continue to support it.

In the background, cross-border criminal networks remain very active. The revenue generated by this illicit trafficking are a financial boon for terrorist groups operating in northern Mali. The delays in the peace process and the often insufficient presence of State authority provide an opportunity for the enemies of peace to satisfy their economic interests. This situation is untenable and must cease. Given the cross-border nature of these networks, a regional approach is needed.

We welcome the efforts of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel) to set up a regional force, with a first step of strengthening cross-border cooperation. We are exploring how we can effectively support this initiative so that it contributes positively to the work of MINUSMA and the French Force Barkhane. However, let us not lose sight of the need to include peace-stabilization efforts in the framework of the peace agreement. Complementarities and opportunities exist between peacekeeping efforts and the regional initiative of the G-5 Sahel, and we will try to articulate them with our partners. In the immediate future, MINUSMA will strengthen support for the Malian armed forces and the implementation of the reforms envisaged in the field of defence and security.

In that context, MINUSMA will continue to play a major political and security role, particularly as one of the main providers of stability in the north and part of the centre of the country. To that end, MINUSMA is taking the necessary steps to adjust its priorities and posture according to the stakes and progress made on the ground, in accordance with its mandate, while taking into account the security of its staff and the objective of providing the best possible support.

We are also pursuing our mobilization efforts with contributing countries, exploring innovative partnerships and concepts in order to fill our operational gaps. If we are still unable to deploy the 2,049 military personnel and 480 police personnel authorized by resolution 2295 (2016), there are very real prospects for progress and we are determined to do our all to ensure that they materialize as quickly as possible. The deployment of the rapid reaction force of the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire to Mali, originally planned for February, should take place between May and October. As for the logistics combat battalion, Sri Lanka will deploy a company in July and Egypt will deploy three companies between the months of July and December. We are also continuing our efforts to deploy other capabilities, including transport and attack helicopters, among others.

(*spoke in English*)

In conclusion, there are at this stage three important points. First is the need to continue to strongly encourage the parties to redouble their efforts to accelerate the implementation of the peace agreement and to clarify the next steps once the interim period expires in June. Secondly, we need to address the scourge of international and transnational organized crime and its impact on the peace efforts. On this particular aspect, the Security Council has already expressed its intention to consider targeted sanctions against spoilers. We believe that it is time to consider establishing such a sanctions regime. Finally, in the light of the prevailing political and security situation, MINUSMA continues to adjust its priorities and posture, within the existing mandate, in order to provide the best support. We will revert in due course if any adjustments to the MINUSMA mandate are required, in particular in our next end-of-mandate report.

The President: I thank Mr. Lacroix for his briefing. I also thank him for his leadership and time. We look forward to working with him.

Before calling on speakers, I should like on behalf of us all, extend our condolences to France for the soldier who was lost in Mali yesterday. We know the sacrifices our military make when they do this work, and our hearts and prayers are with the people of France today.

I now give the floor to those Council members who wish to make statements.

Mr. Delattre (France) (*spoke in French*): I would like to welcome the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Mali, His Excellency Mr. Abdoulaye Diop, whose presence is important for all of us and for our joint efforts in Mali.

I would also like to thank the new Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix, for his very enlightening briefing and to take this opportunity to extend our warmest wishes for success in his new duties.

Almost two years after the signing of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali, and despite the real progress made, Mali is in a difficult situation and remains subject to the threat of terrorist groups. The alliance of terrorist groups that was announced a month ago under Al-Qaida in the Sahel, under the command of Iyad ag Ghali, reveals a macabre competition between Da;esh and Al-Qaida in Africa. In that context, it is more than ever urgent that the Malian parties fully implement the peace agreement at two levels.

First, at the political level, it is urgent that the Malian parties fully implement the agreement. After long months of stagnation, real progress has been made recently by the Government and the signatory armed group to fulfil their commitment under the peace agreement. This includes the installation of some interim authorities in the north of the country, the launch of mixed patrols in Gao, and the convening of the conférence d'entente nationale, bringing together all the actors concerned. But these achievements remain fragile and insufficient nearly two years after the signing of the agreement. On the ground, the populations of northern Mali have to see any noticeable improvement in their living conditions. The interim administrations are not yet operational, the fight against impunity remains insufficient, and the redeployment of the Malian State in the north has made little progress, as has the reintegration of veterans. We ask the signatory parties to set their mistrust aside and demonstrate their sincerity in implementing the peace agreement.

In their successive reports on Mali, Secretaries-General Ban Ki-moon and Guterres have recommended to the Security Council to impose sanctions against those who hinder the implementation of the peace agreement. We believe this approach to be essential in order to remove the numerous obstacles of the peace process and to encourage all the Malian actors on the ground to choose the side of peace. The creation of a Security Council sanctions regime should also target those, be they signatories to the agreement or not, who engage in trafficking and block any peace that may be contrary to their interests.

In a complementary way, the international community must reinforce its mobilization in support of the implementation of the peace agreement. France reiterates in particular its full support for the good offices of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Mali, Mr. Annadif. We also welcome the role played by Algeria as leader of the international mediation and support his unwavering commitment.

At the security level, it is urgent that the Malian parties also fully implement the peace agreement. The time squandered by the Malian signatories to the agreement is time won by the terrorist groups. The spread of terrorist attacks in central Mali is proof of that. Contrarily, the redeployment of the presence of the Malian State in the north, as provided for in the peace agreement, would restore the people's hope for peace. The concrete implementation of the peace agreement must demonstrate to all, and especially to unemployed youth in the north, that the voice of terrorism and narcotraffickers is a dead end.

In the meanwhile, the repeated attacks against the Malian security forces in the north places the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) and Operation Barkhane on the front line against terrorist groups. On behalf of France, I would like to salute the courage of the Blue Helmets in Mali, who are carrying out their work in very difficult conditions. MINUSMA, which is the only United Nations peacekeeping operation facing a terrorism environment, needs to be strengthened. MINUSMA must urgently have the staff and equipment approved by the Security Council last June in resolution 2295 (2016). We hope that new troop-contributing countries will commit to Mali during the upcoming special meeting on MINUSMA force generation, which is to take place in New York on 8 May.

With its robust mandate and unprecedented technological mans, MINUSMA is a groundbreaking operation for the United Nations. Without the presence of MINUSMA and Operation Barkhane to support Mali, terrorist groups would be able to reconstitute a safe haven that could host terrorists from throughout the world. On its part, the French Operation Barkhane continues to provide support to MINUSMA in instances when peacekeepers are severely threatened. Launched in 2014 at the request of the States of the Sahel, Operation Barkhane is now deployed over territory larger than the territory of Europe from Lisbon to Moscow. It includes 4,000 military personnel, drones, aircraft, helicopters and hundreds of vehicles. One hundred and fifty terrorists have been put out of operation, with several tons of munitions and weapons seized or destroyed by Operation Barkhane in 2016.

France welcomes the initiative of the Five States for the Sahel to set up a joint force in order to counter the expansion of the terrorist threat at the regional level — for the first time with a focus on securing border areas. We also welcome the support that the Secretary-General intends to accord to that project, in coordination with the States of the region and the African Union. This counter-terrorism force is to become part of the overall peace process in Mali. Only the full implementation by the Malian parties of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali will ensure lasting peace. In addition, the force should complement the efforts of MINUSMA. Since the Group of Five for the Sahel was established (G-5 Sahel), armed forces from Mali, the Niger, Chad and Burkina Faso have regularly carried out joint cross-border military operations, for which Operation Barkhane has provided operational support.

As you have recalled, Madam President, for which I am personally grateful, a French soldier died yesterday in Mali in the course of just such an operation close to the border with Burkina Faso. He is the nineteenth French soldier to die in the Sahel since January 2013. Our determination remains intact — and I would say even stronger than ever — in helping the countries of the Sahel to build up their capacity to counter the terrorist threat. We hope that the Security Council will support the G-5 Sahel in their undertakings.

The Malian parties have a historic responsibility so that the people of Mali can at last enjoy lasting peace. For its part, the Security Council must step up its effort to resolve the crisis, which threatens international peace and security. Peace in Mali is a crucial challenge for us all.

Mr. Seck (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): I thank you, Madam President, for convening this meeting on the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA). I warmly welcome the presence here today of His Excellency Mr. Abdoulaye Diop, Minister for Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and African Integration of the Republic of Mali.

First and foremost, through the French delegation, I should like to express my condolences to the people and the Government of France in connection with the death of one of its soldiers in Operation Barkhane, who gave his life fighting for freedom and stability in Mali.

The Security Council's consideration of the report (S/2017/271) of the Secretary-General on the situation in Mali in line with resolution 2295 (2016) is yet another chance for us to assess the progress made in the implementation of the Algiers Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali, which we in Senegal consider to be the sole road map for moving forward. The briefing given us by the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix, whom I heartily congratulate on assuming his new post, clearly illustrated that there is still some way to go. We welcome the appointment of Mr. Lacroix and assure him of the Senegalese delegation's full support for the success of his undertaking.

It is clear that the commitment of the Government of Mali to sparing no effort in effectively implementing the peace agreement — a commitment that I am sure Minister Diop will shortly reiterate — gives us a reason to believe that, along with the resolute determination and the mutual trust among the signatories, this will serve as the sole measure for successful, lasting reconciliation. We believe that the recently held conference for national harmony is a positive step in that regard. Less than two months from the end of the interim period provided for under the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation, and given the slow pace of implementing various elements of the agreement, the Senegalese delegation would like to highlight the following points.

First, there is a need to effectively enact the interim measures in all the areas concerned. In that regard, we welcome the appointment of interim authorities in Gao, Kidal and Ménaka. We hope that the same will soon be done in Taoudenni and Timbuktu.

Secondly, beginning joint patrols is another requirement in confronting the security challenges in the north and centre of the country. In that regard, the areas of Kidal and Timbuktu should follow the example of Gao, where such patrols are already taking place.

Thirdly, it is also important to speed up the institutional reform process, especially in the area of security. That will make it possible to facilitate the restructuring of the Malian armed forces, whose effective presence in the north will help ensure the restoration of State authority in that part of the country, where there is growing insecurity and all types of trafficking.The presence of MINUSMA and Operation Barkhane in the area is already reassuring. But they must be reinforced with a national army with the primary responsibility for providing security and safety for its citizens. Throughout that entire process, therefore, Senegal insists on the need for training and equipping personnel, especially given the new law on military planning adopted by the National Assembly.

Fourthly, with respect to the deployment of the quick-reaction force, and without prejudice to the force-generation meeting to be held here on 8 May, I can confirm that that will take place as soon as possible. Senegal is now taking the appropriate measures in that connection. I should also like to announce that, two weeks from now, an assessment mission will be conducted to determine how we can specifically ensure the deployment of helicopters.

MINUSMA's mandate will come to an end on 30 June. With a view to its renewal, the continuing hostile environment in which the Mission operates must be taken into account. Given its multidimensional character, it is clear that MINUSMA cannot be considered a classic peacekeeping operation. Boosting its operational capacities is clearly needed. In that regard, I should like to recall the provisions of resolution 2295 (2016). In paragraph 19 (d), the Council asks MINUSMA

> "to anticipate and deter threats and to take robust and active steps to counter asymmetric attacks against civilians or United Nations personnel, to ensure prompt and effective responses to threats of violence".

Senegal therefore continues to call for MINUSMA to be adequately equipped.

I will conclude with a reminder that my country has deployed a 425-unit reserve battalion to MINUSMA, along with a 140-unit engineering company, two 140-unit police companies totalling 280 persons and, as I just mentioned, the deployment of the quick-reaction force is well under way. And I would like to reiterate to the Foreign Minister that Mali has the full support of the Senegalese delegation in its quest for peace and reconciliation.

Mr. Skoog (Sweden): I would first like to warmly welcome Under-Secretary-General Lacroix to his first meeting of the Security Council. We are very much looking forward to working with him.

(*spoke in French*)

We also welcome Foreign Minister Diop back to the Council.

(*spoke in English*)

I would also like to express our condolences to France on the loss of yet another French peacekeeper in Mali.

Despite positive developments, the situation in Mali continues to warrant our attention. We commend the progress that has been made on establishing interim authorities and launching mixed patrols, but with only three months of the interim period remaining, making progress on implementation is even more pressing, and numerous actions still have to be completed. We therefore encourage the Government to redouble its efforts to deliver on the December benchmarks and the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali so that Malians can reap the peace dividend. We also call on all actors to acknowledge that time will be needed beyond the expiration of the interim period to consolidate progress, not least where the interim authorities are concerned. Algeria's sustained commitment to the process will be crucial.

All Malians must feel a sense of ownership in the country's future. The Government should make every effort to ensure that inclusive consultations and channels for interaction between citizens and the State form part of the constitutional review process. That will include addressing the crucial issue of relations between the centre and the periphery, and the essential provisions of the peace agreement. We were encouraged by the broad participation of women in the Conférence d'entente nationale last week, and we emphasize the importance of ensuring women's full and active participation and leadership at all levels of the peace process. We encourage the Secretary-General to take further stock of progress in that area in his next report.

It is urgent that we address the dire security situation in Mali's central regions. That should to be taken into account in the next mandate for the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA). The revised mandate should strengthen the enabling capacity of the United Nations and its ability to use its good offices to promote security. The Government's aspiration to re-establish State authority throughout the country, particularly in Mopti and Ségou, must go beyond mere physical presence and be built on a people-centred approach to governance. It is important to build confidence in the legitimacy of State functions, including by providing basic social services. We welcome the Government's development of a multidimensional strategy for the region and encourage its swift implementation. A trustworthy, community-oriented and human rights-focused police service, along with a clear vision for security-sector reform, will be essential.

Later today, the Council will hold a debate on peacekeeping. We will underline how important we believe it is that peacekeeping operations be seen as part of a broader peace strategy. In Mali, as elsewhere, the primacy of politics should be a guiding principle for United Nations engagement. That also means that we must invest in the right resources for making sure that we can provide adequate support to political solutions. For that reason, in the lead-up to mandate renewals, we encourage the Secretariat, working with the wider United Nations system, to provide conflict and political analysis that is context-sensitive. Such analysis should form the basis for action-oriented Council discussions, including on greater coherence between civilian and military components.

We welcome the steps that the Secretariat has already taken to enhance transparency, predictability and efficiency in MINUSMA's force-generation process, as was called for at the troop- and police-contributing countries' meeting in January (see S/PV.7874). In order to address the long-standing capability gaps in MINUSMA, we urge the troop- and police-contributing countries to make use of that initiative, particularly during the upcoming force-generation conference in May. Sweden would also like to emphasize our shared responsibility for increasing the number of women in all types of posts and at all levels within MINUSMA.

Lastly, the joint force of the Group of Five for the Sahel is a positive step in addressing the regional dimension of the challenges in Mali. A number of issues should be addressed before it becomes operational, particularly its relationship with MINUSMA and its rules of engagement. Ensuring cooperation and interoperability with other security actors and guaranteeing differentiation between humanitarian actors and the military, as well as between the military and the police, should be priorities. In that regard, we also underline the need for making progress in the areas of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and security-sector reform, including by accelerating the efforts to establish the criteria for reintegration, so as to ensure a truly reformed national army.

The commitment of the signatories to the peace agreement to moving forward in a way that benefits all Malians should be welcomed. However, we still need all parties to make an intensified effort if the agreement's full potential is to be realized. MINUSMA has proved to be a critical tool for those efforts. Sweden remains fully committed to supporting it, not least through our considerable contribution to MINUSMA and our extensive cooperation on development.

Mr. Bessho (Japan): I would like to join you, Madam President, and others before me in expressing my deep condolences to the family of the victim and to the Government of France for their loss.

We are pleased to welcome His Excellency Mr. Abdoulaye Diop, Foreign Minister of Mali, to the Council. I would also like to thank Under-Secretary-General Lacroix for his informative briefing and to welcome him to his new post. This is an important and challenging time for United Nations peacekeeping, and we look forward to working closely with him. I would like to assure him of our full support.

As the current mandate of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA)enters its final months, the Council must correctly assess the severity of the situation we face in Mali. The picture is not good. More than a year ago, the Council visited Mali and reiterated its call for concrete progress in implementing the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali. Unfortunately, most of the key observations that we made during our mission are still valid now — the slow implementation of the agreement; the lack of inclusiveness, especially of women and young people; the concerns about the lack of decentralization and the state of the interim authorities in the North; and the minimal progress in security sector reform and the extension of State authority. Since then, the security situation has worsened and become more complex, with continuous attacks by violent extremist and terrorist groups and intercommunal clashes erupting in central Mali.

As we consider MINUSMA's future mandate, we should ask ourselves how the United Nations can better support the overriding goal of implementing the peace agreement. It has 20 chapters, with annexes, and its mutually reinforcing elements must be implemented in a balanced manner. We would like to emphasize the need for further progress in security-sector reform; disarmament, demobilization and reintegration; cantonment; and the redeployment of the Malian defence and security forces. That is crucial to building confidence in the northern and central regions. Japan appreciates the initiative of the Group of Five for the Sahel to establish a new joint force, which represents African States' ownership of the effort to counter terrorism in the region. The Council should study its proposal closely to see how it would interact with MINUSMA.

MINUSMA's mandate is multidimensional, and its strategic priority is supporting the signatory parties in implementing the agreement, particularly the provisions related to the restoration and extension of State authority. Political and institutional reforms are desperately needed, and all five interim authorities in the north must be effective in providing the people with tangible benefits. The time is right for the Council to seriously discuss how MINUSMA can best be positioned to support both the political and institution-building needs arising from the peace process. Japan looks forward to contributing actively to this difficult but necessary discussion.

Mr. Iliichev (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We are grateful to Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, for his briefing on the situation in Mali. We also welcome the presence at our meeting of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Mali, Mr. Abdoulaye Diop.

We have been consistently of the opinion that a stable settlement of the situation in Mali is can be accomplished only through the rigorous implementation by all parties in Mali of the provisions contained in the 2015 Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali. In that regard, we note the positive trend in its implementation. We welcome the launch of the proccess to establish the interim authorities in the five northern regions of the country, as well as the launch of the mixed patrols. We think that this could end the current stagnation and call upon countries to build on that progress. We also note the great significance of the National Accord Conference, which was conducted on the initiative of the Government. We believe that this will also provide an impetus to the peace process in Mali.

We are concerned about the remaining security issues in Mali. The attacks by jihadists on civilian facilities, the Malian military and United Nations peacekeepers continue. We are also concerned by the fact that terrorist activity — including, unfortunately, by Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb — is spreading to the central part of the country and growing increasingly sophisticated. We welcome the political resolve of the Malian parties that made it possible to implement the Algiers Agreement in spite of the barbarous attack on 18 January on the camp of the Operational Coordination Mechanism. Given the situation, we are convinced that it would be appropriate to fully support the parties to the Agreement rather than use the threat of sanctions. Security measures should be strengthened by taking effective steps to resolve serious socioeconomic issues in the north. In that regard we expect the development strategy for the northern regions to be passed. We know that Bamako is actively working on that right now.

Despite international and regional efforts, terrorism in the Sahelo-Saharan region remains the main threat to the security and stability of that part of the continent. The international terrorists there are increasing their activities. They are trying to broaden their geographical scope, and we are witnessing the emergence of new groups and leaders. There was a recent terrorist attack against the French forces, and we extend our condolences to the French in the wake of the death of a French soldier.

The security situation is also influenced negatively by the porous borders open to international criminal groups, drug trafficking, illicit weapons trafficking and other smuggling. We recall that terrorism and violent extremism in Mali and the Sahel came from outside. The radicals in the region appeared after the situation in Libya was destabilized. Without progress in the Libyan settlement, it will be impossible to definitively resolve the issue of terrorism in the Sahel. We are convinced that coordinated steps, both by the Africans and the international community, will continue to be important to fighting this development. We note in that regard the initiative of the Group of Five for the Sahel to create a regional force. However, it is becoming increasingly obvious that military measures will not be enough. The extremist ideology must be countered effectively.

We also need to eliminate its breeding ground by finding more effective solutions to the socioeconomic issues in the region and strengthening State institutions. In that regard, the consistent implementation of the United Nations comprehensive strategy for the Sahel is becoming increasingly topical. We need to make sure that this mechanism gives increasingly efficient yield. Given the opinion of Mali's partners, we supported resolution 2295 (2016), which extended and strengthened the mandate of the Mission. We believe that its full implementation will help ensure the safety of the peacekeepers, increase the effectiveness and role of the Mission in stabilizing the northern areas of Mali, and help the peace process as a whole.

We are concerned by the fact that the numbers of the military and police components of the Mission are very far from the levels planned. We call on the Secretariat to become more actively involved in ensuring that the Mission reaches the needed parameters and that there is the necessary rotation of contingents. We should not put on the back burner efforts to ensure that the peacekeepers have all the necessary basic services and means of protection. The safety of Mission personnel should remain our absolute priority.

Mr. Rosselli (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me to begin by thanking the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix, for his briefing. Since this is his first time taking the floor before the Security Council, I would like to convey to him my wishes for his success and to assure him of the support of my delegation. I would also like to thank the Minister for Foreign Affairs, International Corporation and African integration of the Republic of Mali, Mr. Abdoulaye Diop, for his presence here today.

I thank the United States presidency for promoting transparency in the work of the Security Council by holding most of our meetings this month as open public briefings. Of course, Uruguay has underscored in previous closed consultations on the situation in Mali that little or nothing of what was discussed was actually conveyed to the Malian authorities. We have very willingly attended these quarterly meetings and believe that this is a good opportunity for the positions of the various Council members to be directly conveyed to the Government of Mali and other countries interested in the evolution of the conflict. We regret that the situation in the Republic of Mali continues to deteriorate, largely due to the actions of terrorist and extremist groups that are enemies of the peace and reconciliation process.

We note with satisfaction the statement of the Under-Secretary-General with respect to the interim measures that have enabled the establishment and formation of authorities and mixed patrols during the month of April. Uruguay wishes to reiterate and underscore that the main responsibility for order and the protection of the population in the Republic of Mali lies with the Malian authorities. The international community, in particular the United Nations, has been assisting the Government in its efforts to fulfil the responsibilities vested in it as a sovereign nation. In fact, the international community has been supporting Mali in its efforts to achieve peace in the country in various ways. It has been making financial contributions for the implementation of projects in the north of the country; establishing and strengthening the mandate of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA); and implementing peacebuilding projects thanks to the Peacebuilding Fund. The Secretary-General and the Security Council mission also made visits a year ago.

I would like to highlight the conclusions of the recent high-level meeting held at Headquarters in September to provide new impetus to the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali, co-chaired by Algeria, Mali and the United Nations. That notwithstanding, the achievement of peace in Mali will require the firm and determined commitment of the State, which must seek real and lasting political solutions across its political spectrum to then be able to tackle the terrorist threat.

I agree with what was said by the Under-Secretary-General that we must identify a set of priorities geared first towards implementing the peace agreement between the three signatory parties. Then, once the Government of Mali has achieved political and institutional stability, it will be able to tackle the security problem through effective strategies, with the support of the international community. We cannot lose sight of the fact that the entire Malian population must feel as if they are part of a single State. To that end, the State must make its presence felt across the entire territory, providing basic services to the entire population. We reiterate once again that any territory abandoned by the State becomes fertile ground for the operation of terrorist groups, which take advantage of the vulnerability of the people there.

Uruguay wishes to express its extreme concern over the violations of human rights committed by the defence and security forces of Mali, as described by the Secretary-General in his report (S/2017/271). The institutions entrusted with ensuring law and order should act in strict conformity with constitutional norms, protecting and providing guarantees to the civilian population.

Much has been said about the need to optimize resources for peacekeeping operations, and Uruguay certainly believes that that it is necessary. On this point, it is necessary to highlight the role of the host State in optimizing the results and effectiveness of the operations in the field.

In connection with the possibility of imposing sanctions, as raised in resolution 2295 (2016) and in the latest report of the Secretary-General, Uruguay would be interested in analysing what would be the real impact and scope of such measures, and, most important of all, the position of the Malian Government in that regard. We see the potential imposition of sanctions only as a means to achieve the ultimate goal of the effective implementation of the peace agreement.

In conclusion, Uruguay wishes to reiterate once again that the current mandate of MINUSMA exceeds that generally affodred to a peacekeeping operation, in that it includes possible activities to combat terrorism. Uruguay voted in favour of resolution 2295 (2016), as it considers that the security situation in Mali is extraordinary, but such actions should not be replicated in future peacekeeping mandates. In brief, we shall continue to work to establish stability in Mali and to ensure that MINUSMA is no longer considered the most dangerous peacekeeping operation in the world.

Mr. Vitrenko (Ukraine): I want to start by congratulating Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix on assuming the office of Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations.

(*spoke in French*)

I thank him for his very clear detailed briefing.

(*spoke in English*)

I also want to join in your words of condolence, Madam, to the French delegation. The memories of Council members are still fresh from visiting the headquarters of Operation Barkhane in N'Djamena as part of their journey to the Lake Chad basin, where we were able to fully appreciate the role played by the Operation's soldiers in the region, and in Mali in particular.

Allow me to highlight three points: the security situation, the political process and the activities of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA).

First, my delegation is extremely concerned by the deteriorating security situation in Mali. The scale of terrorist attacks in central and northern parts of Mali has reached an unprecedented level, turning MINUSMA into one of the most dangerous peacekeeping missions in the world. This underlines the urgent need for the parties to uphold their commitments in the security sector. The launch of mixed patrols in Gao is a long-awaited and positive step forward. We should encourage the Government of Mali and the signatory armed groups to expedite the work of launching the mixed patrols in Kidal and Timbuktu, too. The redeployment of Malian the defence and security forces throughout the country is equally crucial for taking control of security. We also support the initiative of the Group of Five for the Sahel countries to establish a regional force, which will contribute to fighting the spread of terrorism and violent extremism in Mali and the region.

My second point concerns the political process. As the transitional period comes to an end, progress on the political track has remained limited. We believe that the parties should redouble their efforts to complete the installation of the interim administrations in the north and to engage in inclusive national consultations aimed at resolving existing differences in light of the upcoming constitutional review and its referendum. The ultimate goal of these efforts should be the comprehensive reform of national institutions, which will help to address the root causes of the conflict and bring real peace dividends to the Malian people.

This leads me to my third and last point. We believe that sustainable peace in Mali cannot be achieved without the support of MINUSMA. Ukraine commends the courage and dedication of the men and women of the Mission, who continue to operate under extremely difficult and dangerous conditions. Given the fact that MINUSMA remains the primary target of terrorist attacks, we are convinced that particular attention should be paid to the enhancement of the safety and security of its personnel.

Another issue of concern is the significant gap in MINUSMA capabilities. As the Secretary-General's latest report (S/2017/271) notes, despite the adoption of resolution 2295 (2016), none of the additional authorized military and police personnel and none of the additional military assets authored has been deployed. The Mission will not be able to effectively carry out its mandate unless the capability gaps are addressed.

As an active United Nations troop- and police-contributing country, in particular in Africa, Ukraine is exploring ways of doing its share to this end.

Mr. Wu Haitao (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China welcomes Mr. Lacroix in his new role us Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations and thanks him for his briefing.

We welcome the participation of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Mali, Mr. Diop, and thank the international mediation team, including Algeria, for its good offices.

We extend our deepest condolences for the death of a French peacekeeper.

China supports efforts of the people and the Government of Mali to promote the peace process. We commend the resolve and action of the Government of Mali in applying the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali. The establishment of interim authorities in northern Mali has seen progress recently. The joint patrols by the signatory parties to the peace ageement have begun, and the National Accord Conference was successfully held and adopted its final report, all of which China welcomes.

At the same time, the Mali peace process faces difficulties. Terrorist activities continue to spread, posing challenges to the political and security situation in Mali. The international community should actively support the peace and reconciliation process in order to achieve security, stability and social development. I should like to make the following points.

First, we must support Mali in accelerating the implementation of the peace agreement. We welcome the promise of the signatory parties to the peace agreement that they will continue promoting the peace process. We hope that all parties will consolidate their achievements to date and actively advance inclusive political dialogue that encompasses all regions and ethnic groups, and accelerate their implementation of the provisions of the agreement so that peace and reconciliation can be realized as soon as possible. The international community should provide constructive support to peace and development in Mali. The Council's actions should be conducive to maintaining the existing results of the peace process and mutual trust among all parties. China commends the work of the international mediation teams in promoting peace talks among all parties in Mali, and hopes that the team will continue to play a positive role in the political process.

Secondly, we must help Mali to strengthen its security and counter-terrorism capacities. The international community should continue to assist Mali's security forces so that they may strengthen their presence in the northern and central regions and gradually assume the responsibility to maintain national security. All parties should, upon request from the Malian Government, provide assistance in the areas of intelligence-collection, military training and ammunition and weapons management.

Terrorist activities in Mali are rampant and highly mobile across borders. This issue requires an integrated approach based on regional cooperation. China welcomes the decision of the Heads of State of the Group of Five for the Sahel countries to create joint counter-terrorism forces for regional security. We call on the international community to support that decision. We support Africa in resolving African issues in African ways and jointly addressing the threat of terrorism.

Thirdly, we support the work of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA). China commends MINUSMA's unwavering efforts to achieve peace and reconciliation in Mali. We will continue to support MINUSMA. We hope that the Mission will pursue its coordination and cooperation with the host country and help Mali to strengthen capacity-building in the area of security and facilitate disarmament, demobilization and reintegration.

MINUSMA is deployed in a complex and dangerous environment; the security situation is very serious and there is a severe shortage of resources, including equipment. We hope that MINUSMA will continue to strengthen security for personnel and communication with troop-contributing countries and assistance providers. We must ensure that MINUSMA has the equipment and resources required to carry out its mandate and defend itself.

China firmly honours its commitment to the Mali peace process. At present, there are some 400 Chinese peacekeepers in MINUSMA. China is ready to work with the international community as a whole to continue to support the peace and reconciliation process in Mali and make our due contribution to lasting peace and stability and economic and social development in Mali.

Mr. Cardi (Italy) (*spoke in French*): I acknowledge Mr. Diop's presence at today's meeting. I would also like to welcome Mr. Lacroix and thank him for his briefing. I wish him every success in his new post.

We note that there has been ongoing progress in Mali's political arena. The holding of the National Accord Conference, new joint patrols in Gao and further steps in the setting up of interim authorities in Kidal, Gao and Ménaka are encouraging signs. However, the deteriorating security situation and the ongoing terrorist threat in the region reminds us that more must be done, and rapidly, to stabilize the country. The solution lies in the implementation of the Algiers agreement. Its implementation and the constitutional reform process under way should be a key component in the process towards inclusive stability that fosters dialogue among the parties in the country. That dialogue must continue beyond the interim period.

Stability in the Sahel depends, to a large extent, on stability in Mali. We share the Secretary-General's concerns about growing ties between terrorism, transnational organized crime and trafficking in drugs and in persons. Such scourges are major hurdles in the peace process in Mali and in the wider region. In partnership with the Secretariat and other members of the Security Council, we will continue our efforts to develop solutions and stem those threats. In that regard, we will also continue to provide bilateral assistance.

I should like to recall that the protection of cultural heritage is part of the mandate of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA). The Council has demonstrated its commitment to that subject by adopting resolution 2347 (2017), which was put forward by France and Italy. The International Criminal Court handed down a historic ruling in the Al-Madhi case about the destruction of cultural heritage in Timbuktu.

With regard to regional efforts, we welcome the initiative of the Group of Five for the Sahel to establish a counter-terrorism brigade and we encourage those same countries and MINUSMA to coordinate their efforts in the region. In more general terms, we believe that it is useful to have a high level of coordination among all international partners working in the security sector in Mali, in particular with the European Union (EU) and its EU Training Mission and the EUCAP Sahel Mali mission. In addition, we recall the importance of relaunching the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel, which, we believe, is a central platform for addressing challenges throughout the region.

MINUSMA continues to face major challenges and we cannot forget the price that it has already paid in human lives. However, MINUSMA's mandate has already shown its ability to include several innovative principles, in spite of logistical constraints and the shortage of equipment. I would like to commend the Mission, troop-contributing countries and the French Operation Barkhane for their efforts. In that regard, I should like to extend condolences to France and to the family of the French soldier from Operation Barkhane, who was killed last night during a mission in the south-east of the country. That serves as a sad reminder of the growing terrorist threat in the region.

In conclusion, I would like to commend the efforts of the Secretariat to ensure MINUSMA's effectiveness, as illustrated by the force generation conference to be held in May. I am also pleased to share information about Italy's contribution to the Mission's Trust Fund. The aim of the Fund is to support Malian security forces in their policing and border-control activities in the centre and east of the country.

Mr. Alemu (Ethiopia): I would like to start by greeting and welcoming the Foreign Minister of Mali, His Excellency Mr. Abdoulaye Diop. I would also like to extend condolences to France and to our colleagues following the loss of one of their compatriots, who was part of peacekeeping efforts in Mali — a country whose people have done so much for Africa.

I wish to thank Mr. Lacroix for his comprehensive briefing on the situation in Mali and on the activities of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali over the past three months. Let me take this opportunity to congratulate him on his appointment as the new Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations and wish him all the very best in the effective discharge of his responsibilities. It was clear to us from our very first encounter with him in Paris a few weeks ago that he has all it takes to hit the ground running at the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, even at such an unprecedented and complex time.

We are encouraged by the recent progress in the implementation of the June 2015 Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in Mali. We note the holding of the high-level meeting of the Agreement Monitoring Committee, which has facilitated renewed efforts for the establishment of interim administrations in three areas for the launch of joint security patrols. We appreciate the efforts of the international mediation team in convening that meeting and the parties for demonstrating commitment to making progress in the implementation of important aspects of the peace agreement. We also welcome the National Accord Conference, held in Bamako from 27 March to 2 April, as part of the implementation of the peace agreement to address the root causes of the conflict and ensure greater inclusiveness in the peace process. We note the outcome of the Conference, which brought together the signatory parties and different sections of Malian society and concluded with the adoption of a National Charter For Unity, Peace And Reconciliation. Those recent developments have injected some momentum in the implementation of the agreement; they need to be further consolidated. The support of the international community, including countries of the region, the Economic Community of West African States, the African Union and the United Nations needs to be sustained.

As other colleagues have stated, with only three months left before the end of the interim period, the implementation of the agreement, no doubt, still faces a number of hurdles and the country continues to confront enormous peace and security challenges. The need for the restoration of inclusive State authority in the central and northern regions of Mali remains critical but continued insecurity in those regions poses serious challenges that prevent the effective deployment of State officials and, in some instances, forces those who have already started their duties to leave the area. Terrorism and violent extremism, transnational organized crime and illicit trafficking continue to pose serious security threats in Mali. The targeting of signatory parties by terrorists and violent extremists to obstruct the implementation of the peace agreement and perpetrate insecurity in the north is a matter of serious concern.

The recent announcement of a merger by armed and terrorist groups in Mali underscores the seriousness of the threat. The efforts of Mali and the countries of the Group of Five for the Sahel region to fight the resurgence of violent extremists and terrorist networks, the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, and other forms of transnational organized crimes need to be supported. In that regard, we note the decision of the countries of the Group of Five for the Sahel to deploy a 5,000-strong joint force.

We appreciate the civilian and military personnel of MINUSMA who are operating under extremely difficult circumstances. We understand the enormous challenge faced by the Mission and recall the meeting of the MINUSMA troop- and police-contributing countries held in January (see S/PV.7874) to discuss the ways and means of enhancing the capacity of the Mission to enable it to effectively carry out its mandated tasks. There is a need to follow up on the outcome of that meeting in order to provide the Mission with the necessary logistical support. We hope that next mandate renewal of the Mission will afford us an opportunity to address some of these issues.

Mr. Aboulatta (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me, at the outset, to welcome His Excellency Mr. Abdoulaye Diop, Minister for Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and African Integration of the Republic of Mali. I would also like to thank Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix for his briefing and congratulate him on taking over the leadership of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. I assure him that Egypt will support him and his Department out of our belief that peacekeepers are very important for the maintenance of international peace and security.

As one of the major troop-contribution countries in the Organization, I would like to extend my condolences to the Government of France for the recent loss of the French soldier in Mali.

The situation in Mali has direct repercussions on regional stability in the Sahel region. These repercussions spill over into North Africa and South Europe. Restoring stability and security in Mali is therefore a local priority with regional and international dimensions.

Mali has had to face difficulties and challenges since the beginning of the crisis, despite earnest and sincere efforts by the Malian parties and the widespread international and regional support for those efforts. However, the achievements on the ground today fall short of fulfilling the aspirations of the Malian people to achieve peace, security and sustainable development and end human suffering.

It is very important to push for the implementation of the provisions of the Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in Mali as a comprehensive framework for parties that really yearn for peace. The accelerated implementation of the Agreement will unite all these parties against their common enemy, namely, terrorist groups.

We cannot underestimate the role of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) in providing assistance to Mali and protecting civilians. I would like now to pay tribute to the personnel of the Mission for the courage they have shown and the sacrifices they have made.

The Malian defence and security forces is the entity that bears the primary responsibility for maintaining peace, security and stability in Mali. It is vital that the Malian forces be restructured and their capacity built up.

The points I have just made are self-evident, and all delegations and stakeholders should agree with them. There is consensus on what the difficulties, challenges and even the solutions are. However, what remains pending is the implementation mechanism.

As the interim period draws to an end for the implementation of the provisions of the Peace and Reconciliation Agreement next June, the Security Council shoulders the responsibility under the Charter of the United Nations to realistically deal with the situation in Mali based on learning from the shortcomings and building on the points of strength in the Council's previous resolutions and policies on Mali and taking practical steps in that regard. It is important to understand the available tools and optimize their use in striving to fulfil MINUSMA's mandate.

MINUSMA is a crucial, indispensable element in the achievement of stability, which is a goal that is clearly within the mandate stipulated in the relevant Security Council resolutions and within the parameters of peacekeeping mandates in general. Any attempt to go beyond this mandate would involve conceptual and operational complexities that would not be in the interest of MINUSMA's forces, nor would it serve the purpose of their deployment.

The States of the Group of Five for the Sahel have taken steps to deploy regional forces to tackle the situation in the Sahel. Those steps must enjoy clear and direct support from the Council and the international community. Regional forces, if they have the necessary technical training capacity, would be in the best position to deal with the challenges in the region. Building the capacity of regional forces would be the best guarantee of sustainable peace and security in the region.

With respect to the political track, an objective and impartial assessment of the achievements made thus far is needed in order to chart a path for future work that would deal with the shortcomings and maximize the progress achieved. We can look into adopting an assessment tool that would not interfere with existing mechanisms that are successfully working. We appreciate the work of these mechanisms; they should not be undermined.

In conclusion, Egypt reaffirms that it will cooperate with Council members and at the bilateral level with Mr. Diop to provide him with all the support to that his country and fraternal people need so that we can bring stability and security to the entire territory of Mali.

Mr. Wilson (United Kingdom): It is good to see His Excellency the Foreign Minister Diop of Mali joining us in New York once more. We look forward to hearing from him, given how much is at stake in his country.

The death of a French soldier yesterday is another stark reminder of how dangerous this environment is, and I pay tribute to him for his sacrifice.

I also want to thank Under-Secretary-General Lacroix for his very clear briefing. And I would like to welcome him. We really look forward to working closely with him as he takes up his critical job.

We are encouraged by recent moves in Mali to implement the terms of the Peace Agreement. As the French Permanent Representative and others have just said, the establishment of interim authorities in three of the five northern regions is a positive step, as is the launching of some mixed patrols that include northern groups and the Malian armed forces. It is also welcome that the National Reconciliation Conference has taken place, which reflected the healthy cross-section of civil society in Mali, including women's organizations, youth groups, non-governmental organizations, business leaders and former combatants. The United Kingdom has consistently pushed for better inclusion of women in the peace process, which, as the representative of Sweden already pointed out, is a critical driver for success. It is therefore good that debate was inclusive, positive and focused on the future of the country.

Nevertheless, I think I should be as frank in public as we are in private consultations. We remain seriously concerned about the apparent lack of political will among the signatories to really implement the Algiers peace accord. Progress is too slow. It is unpredictable and it is slender. Now is the opportunity to change that.

It is in that context that the human rights situation in Mali needs close attention. The Secretary-General's latest report (S/2017/271) details consistent human rights violations, including summary executions and enforced disappearances by members of the Malian defence and security forces and the Platform and the Coordination des mouvements de l'Azawad. There cannot be an excuse for such actions, and perpetrators of those abuses must be held accountable. Addressing impunity is an essential component of reconciliation and of peace. In that regard, I also think that, more broadly, the link between human rights and peace and security could not be more clear or stark, as we will be debating in this Chamber next week.

With regard to security, that continues to be a significant concern. Despite some improvements, there is a real danger of reversing previous gains. The challenges facing the country are numerous and clear. The secretary General's latest report details the porous nature of Mali's borders and indicates that both violent extremist groups and organized criminal gangs continue to exploit the ungoverned space of the country.

To add to the historic presence of Al-Qaida-aligned organizations in Mali, there is now a new threat from Islamic State-affiliated groups along the border between Mali and the Niger, which is fuelled by the lack of a State presence. Both the representatives of France and Italy have already set out the strategic context of the threat. Should it continue unchecked, the impact on Mali and the wider region could be grave.

I would like to pay tribute to the ongoing work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General to Mali, Mr. Annadif. Both the military and the civilian components of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) are operating in challenging circumstances. The threat to United Nations personnel from spoilers intent on disrupting the peace process continues to grow. Nevertheless, the staff of MINUSMA and the French forces of Operation Barkhane continue to do their utmost for the people of Mali and the region in general.

As others have mentioned, that task is made more difficult by the continued shortfall of troop numbers and equipment. It is clear that air cover, reconnaissance capability and armoured personnel carriers in particular are urgently required. We therefore call on potential contributing countries to follow up on the offers that they made to join the Mission, and we welcome Senegal's substantial offer of helicopters.

As I said at the beginning of my statement, political reform is the key to halting the instability. It is unacceptable that MINUSMA should work hard, at a great cost in terms of human life and financial commitment, to maintain a stable environment in which peace can take root if the parties to the Agreement do not take advantage of that and deliver on their promises. Our central message therefore — to be absolutely clear — is that we urge the Government of Mali and opposition groups to seize the opportunities, build on recent progress and press on with implementing the Peace Agreement. MINUSMA is helping to establish the conditions for peace, the only people who can make that peace are the parties themselves.

Mr. Llorentty Solíz (Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): First of all, Bolivia expresses its appreciation for the presence of His Excellency Mr. Abdoulaye Diop, Minister for Foreign Affairs, African Integration and International Cooperation of the Republic of Mali.

We also join our colleagues in offering our condolences to the Government and the people of France and the family of the the French army soldier who lost his life in the line of duty.

We also express our appreciation for the presentation of the Secretary-General's report (S/2017/271) by the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Jean-Pierre Lacroix, and take this opportunity to wish him success in his work.

Bolivia commends the work of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) and the efforts made in stabilizing the Republic of Mali through fulfilling its mandate. We regret that its mandate has been undermined by the incursion of extremist and terrorist elements affiliated with Al-Qaida and what is known as the Islamic State, in particular in the north and centre of the country. We are concerned about the persistent situation of violence caused by those groups, which continues today, thereby undermining the goals of the legitimate Government of Mali, the United Nations, partner countries and regional and international organizations that have reaffirmed their commitment to the peace process and constructive dialogue so as to definitively achieve stabilization in Mali.

We condemn the attacks carried out by irregular and terrorist groups against the Malian defence and security forces as well as MINUSMA through increasingly sophisticated, complex and lethal means that collaterally affect civilians, thereby resulting in deaths and leading to the displacement and movement of people to neighbouring countries. We also strongly condemn the use of anti-personnel mines and similar types of weapons, which continue to jeopardize the entire civilian population and the defence and security forces of the Malian Government.

For its part, Bolivia expresses its concern about violence directed against civilians. According to the latest report of the Secretary-General, irregular groups have committed crimes, including sexual abuse directed against women, girls and boys, and there have been reports of summary executions, forced disappearances, the recruitment of children and attacks against personnel of the United Nations peacekeeping mission.

We demand that the armed groups lay down their weapons and demobilize. We also urge them to put aside whatever sectarian differences they might have that stand in the way of constructive dialogue, and to solidify previous agreements so as to end the conflict. Moreover, we value and stress the importance of the Government of Mali's tireless search for a process leading to reconciliation, pacification and understanding through inclusive dialogue that will lay the foundations for stability. We call on MINUSMA to continue to work with the Government of Mali to achieve those goals and in greater coordination with it in the framework of respect for the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Mali.

Finally, Bolivia is aware of the difficult process that the brotherly country of Mali is going through, which has not led to the stability and peace that it needs. We therefore urge donor countries, regional organizations and the international community, in general, to continue to actively contribute to finding the appropriate means necessary to achieve the disarmament, demobilization and definitive reintegration of armed groups through political initiatives, pacification and support for a final reconciliation process for the Malian people.

Mr. Umarov (Kazakhstan): Allow me first to express our sincere condolences to our French colleagues on the loss of the soldier who was engaged in peacekeeping operations in Mali.

We welcome the presence of His Excellency Mr. Abdoulaye Diop in the Chamber. We congratulate Jean-Pierre Lacroix on his new appointment and wish him every success in discharging his duties and offer him our support. We thank him for his update based on his visit to Mali.

I would like to raise several key priorities given that the mandate of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) is scheduled to end in three months.

Kazakhstan notes the efforts taken by the Malian Government in implementing the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali, signed in June 2015. However, since tensions continue to prevail, we encourage continued dialogue so as to reduce tensions among armed groups and the consequent instability that they cause. It is therefore necessary to engage them in the peace process so as to integrate them in State structures.

In particular, the mixed patrols by Malian security forces and insurgents in Gao that have taken place since 23 February could gradually be extended. Similarly, the work of the interim administration in the three cities of Kidal, Gao and Timbuktu needs to be reinforced to advance the Peace Agreement. Attempts by armed groups to derail the peace process must be prevented by vigorously implementing the process of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration.

Our country stands in full agreement with the opinion of the African Union (AU), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the United Nations and the European Union, as it was expressed in their joint statement of 7 March, that putting the Peace Agreement within the framework of the Algiers process is the only way to establish lasting peace. The commendable mediation role of Algeria must be fully supported with a focus on furthering the political settlement as the ultimate solution.

Kazakhstan reiterates its support for the efforts of the AU, ECOWAS and the countries of the Sahara and Sahel region to strengthen border security and regional cooperation. A regional strategy is the most effective means of achieving the latter. We therefore encourage the States members of the Group of Five for the Sahel — Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and the Niger — to proceed with the establishment of a regional force to combat terrorism and transnational crime.

We join others in strongly condemning the violent attacks perpetrated by terrorist groups against civilians, humanitarian workers, Malian security forces, MINUSMA and French personnel. The emergence of five jihadi entities under the Group for the Support of Islam and Muslims has significantly increased the terrorist threat in the country and in the region. As Chair of the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015) concerning ISIL (Da'esh) Al-Qaida and associated individuals groups undertakings and entities, Kazakhstan strongly urges international security forces and the Malian armed forces to upgrade their anti-terrorist capabilities.

Such a destabilizing situation means that the international community must find ways to strengthen the Malian security forces with financial and technical assistance. The recent decision of the European Union to extend its Capacity Building Mission in Mali until 18 January 2018 is hailed as a prudent strategy. The Mission greatly contributes to security sector reform.

The fragile security situation with an increase in inter-ethnic violence has led to the deterioration of human rights, which should be addressed by the Council. Addressing the grievances and frustrations of different communities, and especially the youth at risk that are not benefiting from the peace agreement in their daily lives, including those who could be recruited by violent groups, is a related issue.

We pay tribute to the brave men and women of MINUSMA for their sacrifice, and we thank the troop- and police-contributing countries for their personnel, as well as the countries that have provided much-needed military-technical equipment, such as helicopters and armoured personnel carriers.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of the United States.

I thank Under-Secretary-General Lacroix for his briefing, and Minister for Foreign Affairs Diop for coming here today. Mali's support for the objectives of United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) is essential. We appreciate his interest in personally sharing his Government's views with us.

Later today, the Security Council will hear a briefing from the Secretary General on United Nations peacekeeping. My message will be that we need to give peacekeeping missions mandates that they can actually achieve. We need to see host Governments and peacekeepers working together to make life safer for people on the ground. We need to make sure that we have the backs of peacekeepers when they cannot do their jobs. And we need to make sure missions have benchmarks for accountability.

We will have a lot more to say this afternoon about peacekeeping, but the Mission in Mali is a key example of where the United States believes the Security Council needs to take a hard look. This is the world's most dangerous peacekeeping mission. We are putting troops in harm's way, asking them to patrol deserts where Al-Qaida thrives. The United States is deeply grateful to the courageous troop contributors, and we condemn, in the strongest terms, the cowards who continue to threaten them.

But the Mission today faces two critical problems. The first is that in far too many parts of Mali there is no peace for the Blue Helmets to keep. It has been almost two years since the Government and armed groups signed a peace agreement. The United States welcomes the installation of three of the five interim authorities in Mali's northern regions, but we still see delay after delay in actually implementing the peace agreement. The Government is absent from many parts of the country, thus providing few services despite the humanitarian needs of Mali's people. Violence is getting worse, armed groups are not laying down their arms and terrorist groups are deepening their cooperation with each other. We therefore have peacekeepers on the ground to support a peace agreement that is not gaining traction.

The second problem is that the Mission's equipment is simply not up to standard. The force has a mandate to make its presence felt to counter the influence of extremist and armed groups, but chronic equipment shortages force the peacekeepers in Mali to curtail their operations. Consider these examples. Even as the threat from improvised explosive devices grows, the force is operating with just 62 per cent of the armoured personnel carriers it is supposed to have deployed. Without enough carriers, the peacekeepers cannot patrol much beyond their bases in the places where Mali's people are most desperate for the help of the United Nations. In the second half of 2016 just 10 per cent of patrols in the Mission's dangerous western sector were medium- or long-range patrols. That means peacekeepers in Mali are not able to be present in areas where the extremists thrive.

Another problem is the Mission's helicopter shortages. Many of the force's bases are in very remote areas. Without helicopters, peacekeepers in Mali must rely on treacherous roads to reach those bases. The lack of helicopters means medical evacuation response times are far too high when peacekeepers get into trouble. That is a dangerous situation but, if we act urgently, there is hope. We can and we must do better. We need to start with the political process. That is why I appreciate the Foreign Minister's presence here today. The United States knows that Mali's Government can do more to implement the peace agreement.

We call on the Government to immediately focus on extending the authority of the State, and for all three signatory parties to the accord to live up to their commitments to stop the violence. That will make Mali safer and more stable. We can also work harder to address the Mission's shortfalls. The resources are out there. While peacekeepers in Mali are desperate for additional armoured personnel carriers, peacekeepers in southern Lebanon have many times more than Mali, with much less need. Countries have pledged more equipment to Mali's peacekeepers. The United States urges those countries to follow through as quickly as possible. The Mission's troop contributors must also live up to their commitments to give their troops the necessary training and equipment to operate in those tough conditions.

Finally, our conversations in the Security Council about the peacekeeping Mission in Mali cannot be only about equipment. The Mission's mandate has to be reasonable and achievable. That is why, in the coming months, the United States will be taking a careful look at the force's mandated tasks and the distribution of its personnel. I am sure that the Council can agree that peacekeepers in Mali need to be prepared to succeed. We want a mandate that helps the Mission play a more effective role. Peacekeepers in Mali operate in very challenging circumstances, but their mission is essential. They put their lives on the line every day to help Mali's people. By working together, the Council, troop contributors and supporters in the international community can help this peacekeeping operation make real progress towards supporting peace in Mali. We have no time to waste.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and African Integration of the Republic of Mali.

Mr. Diop (Mali) (*spoke in French*): It is always with renewed pleasure that I address the Security Council for the review of the quarterly report (S/2017/271) of the Secretary-General on the situation in Mali. With me here today is Mr. Mohammed El Mokhtar, Minister for National Reconciliation and of the Diplomatic Council of the President of the Republic of Mali .

Mali's delegation takes note of the report of the Secretary-General and thanks Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations Lacroix for his presentation of the report.

Since the Council's review of the Secretary-General's previous report (S/2016/1137) on the situation in Mali, in January (see S/PV.7864), significant progress has been made in the areas of policy, security, the restoration of State authority throughout the country, the protection of human rights, development and humanitarian action. I am pleased that the report underlines that progress and acknowledges the efforts made by the Government in that regard — under the leadership and firm commitment of Mr. Ibrahim Boubacar Keita, President and Head of State of the Republic of Mali.

In his New Year's address to the nation, the President announced important measures for 2017, within the framework of the implementation of the Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in Mali.

Today I am pleased to confirm to the Council that in addition to the many institutional measures under way, the conference for national harmony, which took place from the 27 March to 2 April in Bamako, has concluded successfully. This was an opportunity for the children of Mali to come together, and the conference lived up to its promise: it was fully inclusive, as all Mali stakeholders were able to set out together on the path to peace and national reconciliation, including the Government of Mali, the Coordination des mouvements de l'Azawad, the Platform coalition of armed groups, the majority and opposition political parties, and all of the active forces in the country. Discussions were frank, open and in-depth, in a spirit of complete of freedom of speech, in keeping with article 5 of the agreement, and resulted in relevant recommendations that will form the foundation for the elaboration, under the auspices of the President of the Republic, of a charter for peace, unity and national reconciliation.

Another major step in the implementation of the agreement was the compromise reached by the parties at the high-level meeting of the Agreement Monitoring Committee held on 10 February to establish interim authorities for all regions in the north of Mali. The interim authorities were already effectively put in place on 28 February in Kidal and on 2 March in Gao and Ménaka. Pursuant to the consultations conducted by the high representative of the President of the Republic in charge of the implementation of the agreement, we hope to see the establishment of interim authorities in Timbuktu and Taoudenni on 13 April, God willing.

In the area of defence and security, the Government of Mali has taken the necessary measures to operationalize mixed patrols. The terrorist attack against the Operational Coordination Mechanism in Gao on 18 January, as terrible as it was, in no way weakened the resolve of the Malian parties to ensure a successful outcome to the process. Security-sector reform is also under way, as are the cantonment and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) processes.

In parallel, the process of reviewing the Constitution is also under way. The goal here is to focus on the relevant provisions of the peace agreement, in particular through the establishment of a second chamber in Parliament. The Government has already forwarded to the National Assembly a draft law on this issue, which, once adopted by the national representation, will then be submitted to the people of Mali via referendum by the end of the year.

Above and beyond these measures, the Government is continuing its development efforts on the ground, when security conditions allow, through such programmes as the emergency programme for development in the north of the country and the programme for economic reconstruction and recovery.

These progress that I have just described was made possible, as I mentioned earlier, thanks to the leadership and the resolute personal commitment of the President of the Republic of Mali and by the gradual rebuilding of trust among the stakeholders in Mali. Nonetheless, these still-fragile accomplishments should not make us lose sight of the many challenges still facing the process. These include issues related to the mobilization of resources for the effective implementation of the agreement and for the cantonment and DDR processes; the restoration of State authority throughout the territory of Mali, as Council members have just mentioned, which is a strategic objective of very high importance for the Government of my country; and the provision of a peace dividend to the people who live in regions affected by the crisis, basically all of the Malian people, who are suffering from the effects of the crisis.

The security situation in central Mali is also a source of concern for the Malian authorities. In order to rise to the challenge, we have taken the following three measures.

The first measure is the adoption of an integrated security plan for these regions aimed at ensuring the presence and operationalization of public administration at all levels as well as basic social services, and to enable us to combat the proliferation of light weapons as well as coordinate, monitor and assess the strategy for fighting insecurity and terrorism in the central region.

The second measure aims to operationalize traditional mechanisms for conflict prevention and management, and the third is the creation of a team of judges who will work with traditional leaders in the framework of transitional justice. The implementation of these measures will require substantial support from all of the members of the Council and all partners.

Ten months after the adoption of resolution 2295 (2016), I wish to note that that the relevant provisions of the resolution are, unfortunately, still difficult to implement on the ground, in particular because of the gaps that Council members have just underscored related to the operational capacities that the Mission requires in order to properly discharge its mandate.

Here I would like to underscore the need for the Council to provide the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) with the means necessary for it to fully carry out its stabilization mandate in Mali and also to help the Government in its efforts to gradually establish State authority throughout the country's territory.

In this regard, we welcome the announcement made by Ambassador Seck of Senegal of the deployment of the rapid-reaction force within MINUSMA, made up of a Senegalese contingent. I also wish to underscore, as several Council members, including China, Egypt, Kazakhstan and Senegal, have done, the need to strengthen the capacity of the Malian security and defence forces. Indeed, regardless of the nature of the mandate, it is the Government of Mali and the Malian defence and security forces, which face no limitations in terms of mandate or timeline, that must accomplish the work on the ground. Today our forces are the ones on the front lines of the fight against terrorism and the ones suffering the highest casualties, so it is extremely important to view this issue in parallel with that of the strengthening of the Mission itself.

I wish also here to reiterate our appeal to all partners to honour the commitments they have undertaken in order to promote the peace process in Mali.

One of the major challenges facing the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali remains the upsurge of attacks by terrorist groups, violent extremists and drug traffickers against the civilian population; against the Malian defence and security forces, as I just mentioned; against the international forces; and, most recently, against the signatory movements, which are increasingly becoming targets for terrorists.

We are confronting the terrorist challenge along with the countries of the Sahel region and the rest of the world, as this challenge and threat is global in nature. The Security Council is well informed, as was mentioned by an eminent member of the Council, about the situation in Libya and the threat that this presents for the Sahel region. The Council last month visited the Lake Chad basin region and witnessed the gravity of the situation in Cameroon, Nigeria, the Niger and in Chad owing to the activities of the Boko Haram terrorist organization.

To deal with this worrisome security challenge, the Heads of State of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel) decided, during their second ordinary summit held in Bamako on 6 February, to create a joint force to fight terrorism, transnational organized crime and illegal immigration throughout the G-5 Sahel territory. In its capacity as current Chair of the G-5 Sahel, Mali is coordinating this process in order to establish this force as quickly as possible. Its strategic concept of operations will be considered during the week of 13 April by the African Union Peace and Security Council, which will then submit it to the Security Council for approval.

Once the Security Council receives the concept of operations, I strongly hope it will quickly address this issue and authorize without delay the deployment of this joint G-5 Sahel force, with the financial support of the United Nations and partners of Mali, which is necessary for its functioning. I welcome the Secretary-General's support for the establishment of the force, which will work in close coordination, in perfect harmony and in full complementarity with MINUSMA, the Barkhane force and all the countries, institutions and partners involved in the region. I would also like to say that the goal of the Heads of State of the G-5 Sahel is not to become involved in an endless war. We believe that, by engaging in this fight against terrorism, we are creating an environment that will be more conducive to the success of MINUSMA in carrying out its work. By doing this, we are fully aware that we are becoming part and parcel of the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali. The force, therefore, can only create the conditions for better implementation of all the commitments undertaken by the all the parties.

With regard to the human rights situation referred to in paragraphs 33 to 40 of the report of the Secretary-General, the Government of Mali took note of the statistics provided. It should be recalled that the majority of cases of alleged violations that have been documented and attributed to the Government have been carried out in areas in which judicial and investigative units are absent owing to the lack of security. In any event, I reiterate the determination of the Malian authorities to take all necessary measures to prevent and, if necessary, punish proven cases of human rights violations. In that regard, I should say that, at this stage, we are dealing only with leads and only an investigation on the ground can allow us to establish the facts and gradually bring the perpetrators to justice.

I would not want to conclude without conveying the warm congratulations of the Government of Mali to the delegation of the United States of America on assuming the presidency of the Security Council. We wish you, Madam President, every success as you preside over the Council. My congratulations also go to the United Kingdom for its outstanding steering of the work of the Security Council during the past month, one of the highlights of which was the adoption of resolution 2347 (2017), on the protection of cultural heritage. Mali, which has been a victim of the destruction of part of its cultural heritage during the occupation of its northern regions, of course became co-author of that resolution, which was initiated by France and Italy, to whom I pay tribute.

I would also like to commend the work carried out by Mr. Hervé Ladsous, former Under-Secretary-General, during the six long years in which he led the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. At the same time, I would like to congratulate Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix on the trust placed in him by the Secretary-General when he was put at the head of Department of Peacekeeping Operations. I would like to assure him of the full cooperation of the delegation of Mali in the carrying out his mission. I am pleased to express, once again, the gratitude of the people and Government of Mali to the United Nations; the countries and institutions that are members of the Agreement Monitoring Committee, presided by Algeria; the troop-contributing countries; and the international community for the sacrifices they have made in order to reach a definitive settlement of the Malian crisis.

I would also like to pay tribute to all the victims of this crisis — civilian and military, foreigners and Malians — who died with honour on the battlefield. Allow me to recall Julien Barbé, a French solider who lost his life yesterday while carrying out a mission in Mali. I would like to express to the Council, to President of France François Hollande and the people of France the deepest condolences of the President of the Republic of Mali and all the people of Mali. This is a tragedy and it once again reminds us of the sacrifices made by France and many other countries to bring about stability in our country. We hope that this soldier will not have died in vain.

Finally, I welcome the efforts of the French Barkhane forces and the excellent work of the men and women of MINUSMA, with Special Representative Annadif Mahamat Saleh at its head, with whom the Government of Mali has an excellent cooperative working relationship.

Before concluding, I would like to say that I have listened to Council members and I understand the expectations that have been expressed at this table by members. I also understand the impatience that every member feels and which is reflected by that of the people of Mali on the ground, who also want us to move much more quickly in ensuring the security of our country, protecting it and ensuring its stability. I have heard that message loudly and clearly and I will convey it to the highest authorities in Mali.

I am convinced that we will do everything we can to continue enjoying the trust that has been placed in my country and my people by the Council. We hope that, with God's help, in the upcoming months and weeks, we will be able to bring a new dynamism to the peace process in Mali in order to ensure that peace and stability spread throughout the region.

The President: I would like to thank His Excellency Mr. Diop for his statement. His presence is very appreciated, as we all needed to hear his thoughts. We also want again to congratulate Mr. Lacroix. We all look forward to working with him as well.

The meeting rose at noon.

United Nations

S/PV.7918

Security Council

Seventy-second year

Provisional

7918th meeting

Thursday, 6 April 2017, 4.30 p.m.
New York

President:	Mrs. Haley/Ms. Sison	(United States of America)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Llorentty Solíz
	China	Mr. Liu Jieyi
	Egypt	Mr. Aboulatta
	Ethiopia	Mr. Alemu
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Italy	Mr. Cardi
	Japan	Mr. Bessho
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Umarov
	Russian Federation	Mr. Iliichev
	Senegal	Mr. Seck
	Sweden	Mr. Skoog
	Ukraine	Mr. Yelchenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Rycroft
	Uruguay	Mr. Rosselli

Agenda

United Nations peacekeeping operations

Peacekeeping operations review

Letter dated 4 April 2017 from the Permanent Representative of the United States of America to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2017/287)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the translation of speeches delivered in other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. *Corrections* should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-0506 (verbatimrecords@un.org). Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (http://documents.un.org).

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The meeting was called to order at 4.35 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

United Nations peacekeeping operations

Peacekeeping operations review

Letter dated 4 April 2017 from the Permanent Representative of the United States of America to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2017/287)

The President: The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2017/287, which contains a letter dated 4 April 2017 from my delegation addressed to the Secretary-General, transmitting a concept paper on the item under consideration.

I now give the floor to the Secretary-General.

The Secretary-General: United Nations peacekeeping is an investment in global peace, security and prosperity. Around the world, Blue Helmets are the concrete expression of the determination of the Charter of the United Nations "to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war". The achievements of peace operations are a source of great pride to us all. When they fail, it causes us pain and drives us to improve. United Nations peacekeepers have contributed to a legacy of stability from El Salvador to Namibia, from East Timor to Côte d'Ivoire and from Mozambique to Cambodia. Fifty-four missions have completed their mandates and closed; two more will do so in the coming months. That is our objective for every peacekeeping mission — to do the job entrusted to it; to save lives; to prevent mass atrocities; to set the stage for stability and sustainable peace; and to close. And, from start to finish, to be cost-effective. Today's peacekeeping budget is less than half of 1 per cent of global military spending.

At the start of my first day in office, I laid a wreath to honour the more than 3,500 fallen peacekeepers who have given their lives for the ideals of the United Nations Charter. We owe them a great debt for their dedication and courage. The safety of peacekeepers will remain our priority.

(*spoke in French*)

United Nations peacekeeping operations are very diverse and are conducted in extremely complex environments. It is our shared responsibility to enable them to adapt to our changing world. As the High-Level Independent Panel on United Nations Peace Operations clearly stated, our ambitions do not match our capabilities, and our goals are not commensurate with the resources available for them. That is why peacekeeping operations often seem to be at a standstill and unable to keep up with the magnitude of their task. In many cases Blue Helmets are deployed in places where peace itself is at stake. At times they have to face hostility and a lack of cooperation from host Governments. At times their security is seriously threatened by terrorism, proliferating arms and the growth of transnational crime. We also see a disconnect between political processes and some of our major operations, which can seem to be at an impasse with no real prospect of progress.

Those are the challenges we must face together. In the Secretariat, we must be more effective, more efficient and more accountable for our actions.

We are counting on the General Assembly to give us strong political support and to relax the rules and regulations in order to facilitate our work. We rely on troop- and police-contributing countries to deploy dedicated and well-trained personnel. We rely on countries that are near conflict zones and on regional organizations to respect their obligations with regard to peace operations. We rely on the full support of host countries. Above all, we rely on the Council to show unity and to adopt clear and achievable mandates.

The United Nations derives its legitimacy from the trust placed in it by the peoples of the world. However, that trust has been shaken by the appalling cases of sexual exploitation and abuse that have tarnished the image of the Organization as a whole, as well as that of some of our peacekeeping missions. I have presented my plan to combat this scourge and I am determined to implement it, with the support of members.

(*spoke in English*)

We need a comprehensive strategy that supports the diverse range of our missions and takes account of the entire peace continuum, from prevention, conflict resolution and peacekeeping to peacebuilding and long-term development. This strategy must be based on two overriding principles.

First, there is no one-size-fits-all peace operation. While some missions have straightforward mandates that focus on separating warring parties or monitoring ceasefires in a relatively stable environment, others have more robust mandates, such as to protect civilians and deal with multiple armed groups. The protection of civilians will continue to be a key priority for peacekeeping. We are supporting the African Union Mission in Somalia, which is backed by a Security Council mandate. In Mali, while United Nations peacekeepers are not and should not be directly engaged in fighting terrorism, they coordinate with counter-terrorist forces. The Council recently expressed its support for the regional initiative by Member States in the Lake Chad basin to develop a multinational joint task force to combat Boko Haram.

Finally, our political missions are supporting peace and reconciliation in Afghanistan and Iraq, together with development agencies and others. All these operations play a vital role in building and sustaining peace. But our political strategies, management systems and administration are not set up to support them effectively. We must plan for diversity across time and geography, creating flexibility without additional costs.

Secondly, the success of every mission depends on an active political process, with the commitment of all stakeholders, particularly Governments. The Council has a vital role to play in securing this commitment and cooperation. I will personally support this goal in any way possible. I have spoken before to the Council about the urgency and necessity of a surge in diplomacy for peace.

We have already made important recent reforms to peacekeeping. I thank Mr. Hervé Ladsous for his important role, and count on the continued leadership of Under-Secretary-General Jean-Pierre Lacroix. We have increased the number of troop- and police-contributing countries and improved the generation of forces so that they can be deployed more quickly. Modern technologies are improving situational awareness and analysis. We have decentralized key functions, and we are strengthening performance management and accountability. These reforms have reduced the cost per capita of uniformed peacekeepers by 18 per cent since 2008, and decreased the number of civilian staff significantly. But much remains to be done.

In the short term, we must end operations that have achieved their goals and reform those that no longer meet needs on the ground. Our missions in Cote d'Ivoire and Liberia will soon close, and we must consider reforms and exit strategies for other long-standing missions. In Haiti, we are ready to transform our mission so that it will focus on political support, institution-building and development. In Darfur, the changing situation on the ground may call for a significant reduction of forces. Each mission must be considered in its unique political context. In that spirit, I commend the Council's unanimous decision last week to renew the mandate of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

In the longer-term, I see nine areas for reform.

First, I have established a team to examine how to improve our peace and security architecture, which will report to me by June.

Second, we need greater efficiency and accountability. Too many of the rules and regulations of the Secretariat seem designed to prevent rather than facilitate our work. I am committed to changing this, and I hope Member States will support me, including in the Fifth Committee of the General Assembly.

Third, peacekeeping operations need clear, realistic and up-to-date mandates from the Council, with well-identified priorities, adequate sequencing and flexibility to evolve over time.

Fourth, women must play a far more active role in peace operations, as troops, police and civilian staff. This is not only because gender parity is essential for its own sake, but because the involvement of women is proven to increase the chances of sustained peace, and to reduce incidences of sexual abuse and exploitation.

Fifth, we need better and more coordinated planning, control and leadership of our operations and strategy. The creation of an executive committee and closer cooperation between the Department of Political Affairs and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations are aimed precisely at addressing that. I also plan further decentralization to empower my Special Representatives.

Sixth, we must increase the use of modern technology. This will help us to become more flexible and mobile. I encourage the trilateral arrangements through which countries with the capacity to do so are providing training and equipment to peace operations.

But, alongside these arrangements, I count on these countries to step up their troop contributions.

Seventh, we need to communicate and to increase awareness that United Nations peacekeeping operations are a necessity for global peace, security and prosperity, and that they are achieving results.

Eighth, we need to deepen ties with our regional and subregional partners. At the African Union summit earlier this year, I committed to strengthening our partnership on political issues and peace operations, with stronger mutual support and continued capacity-building. United Nations peace operations will continue to need the vital partnership of the European Union. As the security of Europe is directly affected by situations in which peacekeeping missions are deployed, it is likely that there will be further opportunities for cooperation. It is equally important to develop our relationships with subregional organizations including the Economic Community of West African States, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development and others. I call on the Council to consider supporting the initiative proposed by the Group of Five for the Sahel.

Ninth and finally, these partnerships must be based on solid, predictable funding. I hope the Council will consider supporting missions that are backed by a Council resolution, either with assessed contributions or by promoting other predictable financing mechanisms.

Peace operations are at a crossroads. Our task is to keep them relevant with clear and achievable mandates, and the right strategies and support. Success depends on our collective efforts. The Council can count on my full commitment, but I also count on the unity and support of the Council. I count on it to fulfil its primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security in this changing world.

The President: I thank the Secretary-General for his briefing.

Mr. Seck (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I wish to thank the United States, which is presiding over the Council for the month of April, for having taken the initiative to organize this important meeting on the review of peacekeeping operations, a subject of great importance to my country.

The Council has entrusted us with the chairmanship of the Working Group on Peacekeeping Operations. More importantly, Senegal has been involved in peacekeeping operations since it became independent in 1960, when it deployed a military contingent in the Congo. Today, the Senegalese security and defence forces are deployed in eight United Nations peacekeeping missions. Given their importance, I will enumerate them. There is the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali, the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti, the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur, the United Nations Mission in South Sudan, the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire — which is now concluded — and the United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office in Guinea-Bissau. Overall 3,638 people, including 97 women, are deployed.

Senegalese army officers hold the following posts: Force Commander of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic, Deputy Force Commander of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali, Deputy Force Commander of the police component of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) and Chief of Staff of the Office of Military Affairs in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations here at the Secretariat in New York. That places my country fifth among troop- and police-contributing countries and first among police-contributing countries.

My country is not committed to United Nations peace operations alone. Senegal currently fields a company size combat force, a level two rural hospital in Guinea-Bissau and a unit of 250-strong in the Gambia, under the auspices of the Economic Community of West African States.

I mention those details to highlight the importance of today's meeting to us. United Nations peacekeeping operations continue to face political, security, strategic, operational and financial challenges in ensuring effective peacekeeping in an ever-changing environment. Such missions are often called upon to protect civilian populations in very complex situations, with limited, and, at times, inadequate resources and operational capacity. They are increasingly deployed in complex environments that are hostile and pose a threat to their own security, not to mention, at times, misunderstandings that emerge during coordination efforts with host countries and local partners.

In addition, it must be acknowledged that there is now a genuine need to adapt peace operations to each area's unique challenges because each operation involves risk. We discussed the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) earlier today (see S/PV.7917). Despite the signature of a peace agreement between the Government and the main armed groups, MINUSMA operates in a difficult environment, characterized by attacks that target United Nations personnel and civilian populations and infrastructure. Despite the adoption of a revised strategic concept, in line with resolution 2285 (2016), several needs remain unmet and it is still difficult for MINUSMA to marshal the resources necessary, in particular independent logistical support and important materials.

It is therefore important to provide United Nations missions with the capacity and resources necessary to enable them to effectively discharge their mandates, in particular with regard to the protection of civilians. It would be even better to ensure that their mandates are feasible and appropriate to the situation on the ground. That is why my country convened a high-level debate here in the Council in November 2016 (see S/PV.7802), during its presidency of the Security Council. The aim of that meeting was to put greater emphasis on the assymetric threats that peace operations face. When designing mandates, we need in-depth analysis that is as objective and as comprehensive as possible. That entails conducting an earnest and clear assessment of human resource, financial and logistical requirements prior to the deployment of missions.

When clear, realistic and feasible mandates exist, with the political support required, peace operations are some of the Organization's most flexible and appropriate tools for meeting the challenges in maintaining international peace and security. Today, however, peace operations encounter major difficulties and restrictions that prevent them from fully carrying out their mandates, such as conflict or the hostility they face in many areas. The African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur, MONUSCO and the United Nations Mission in the Sudan are but a few examples that illustrate the importance of the political dimension in allowing peace operations to effectively carry out their mandates.

In a country such as South Sudan, in which a viable political process is emerging, there is a vast and urgent need for protection. A political, interdependent effort is therefore imperative to enable missions to successfully discharge their duties, in particular with regard to the protection of civilians. Similarly, above and beyond receiving the consent of host States, we must also seek to secure their cooperation because it is the best way to overcome some of the challenges. In addition, missions must make every effort to establish and maintain trust with host States and populations.

The issue of accepting risk when peacekeepers are deployed in conflict situations in which civilians are the targets of direct attacks must be analysed objectively to prevent the credibility of missions from being undermined by their lack of action in such circumstances. In addition, a viable political strategy must underpin the work of United Nations missions. Reviews must be conducted, such as those commissioned by the United Nations in 2015 on peace operations, peacebuilding and the women and peace and security agenda. There is no doubt that peace operations, as political tools, could assist in advancing the fundamental goals of conflict prevention, mediation, the protection of civilians and peacekeeping. Without a political settlement that leads to the presence of a legitimate Government in a State willing and able to ensure the safety of its population, essential duties, such as the protection of those populations, cannot be properly guaranteed.

It is also true that Blue Helmets could assist in establishing and supporting a political process to protect civilians by helping national stakeholders to fulfil their obligations. The Blue Helmets cannot replace them, however. Because its primary responsibility is the maintenance of international peace ans security, the Security Council has a central role to play in making peace operations more suitable for their respective environments and contexts. An early political commitment from the Security Council prior to deployment and for the duration of missions is vital.

In our view, it would be wise to underscore the importance of inclusive national reconciliation that is tied to the twin process of security sector reform and disarmament, demobilization and social reintegration in order to draw up a new social contract that is informed by the trust of civilian populations and the professionalism of security and defence forces. Such efforts are geared towards preventing the resurgence of conflict. Together with the African Union, the Security

Council must continue discussions on predictable and lasting funding of African Union peacekeeping operations, in accordance with resolution 2320 (2016), adopted in November 2016 during the Senegal's presidency of the Council. Senegal reiterates that it has been committed since 1960 to maintaining international peace and security.

In conclusion, I would say that we must continue the much needed process of reforming peacekeeping operations. I would even say that we must accelerate the process, in order to make it more suitable for meeting present and future needs and challenges. In that regard, the recommendations put forward by eminent persons in the various reports, as well as those adopted by the General Assembly, contain ambitious measures in key areas, such as the modernization of troop equipment, the training of personnel and increased financial support for peace operations. The effective implementation of such recommendations would enable peacekeeping operations to enter a new phase in successfully carrying out their missions, thanks to ongoing dialogue, including on mandate design and continuity, among the various stakeholders, such as the troop-contributing countries, the Security Council, the Secretariat and host countries.

Mr. Rosselli (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the United States for taking the initiative to convene today's meeting. I wish in particular to thank the Secretary-General for his presence here today and for his statement and the concepts set forth in it. We have taken note of the nine points that formed the basis of his briefing.

Almost two years since the publication of the report of the High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations, better known as the HIPPO report (see S/2015/446), Uruguay believes that the report's recommendations are still valid and that the Member States must continue to work towards implementing them. In that regard, many of the questions raised in the presidency's concept note (see S/2017/287, annex) are found in the HIPPO report and its recommendations.

As a State Member of the United Nations, an elected member of the Security Council and a troop- and police-contributing country, Uruguay supports the peacekeeping operations review process with a view to making it more efficient and effective, and to ensure that they can truly fulfil the purposes for which they were designed.

In our view, peacekeeping operations are the shared responsibility of three actors: the Security Council, States or parties to peacekeeping operations, and countries contributing troops and police personnel. Each of these actors has its role to play; each has a responsibility to shoulder. The Security Council must assume its multiple responsibilities to ensure that peacekeeping operations are efficient. Therefore, as mentioned in the HIPPO report, political solutions must always underpin the design and deployment of peacekeeping operations, and political momentum must be maintained. We must always bear in mind that lasting peace is not achieved by nor is it maintained through military and technical interventions, but rather thanks to political solutions.

Accordingly, the political strategies underpinning peacekeeping operations must have the support of a united Security Council. Experience has shown and continues to show that when there is a lack of unity in the Council and the lack of a clear role in the support of the peace process, the success of a peacekeeping operation can be seriously compromised. Such was the case — let us be sincere here — with the United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan. Furthermore, and notwithstanding the unity in the Security Council, the primacy of politics is the responsibility of national institutions and their political stakeholders. The United Nations and regional organizations can only back and facilitate the peace process, but not much can be achieved if national stakeholders do not show a genuine commitment to a peaceful solution to the conflict.

Another critical responsibility of the Security Council is to ensure that peacekeeping operations are more flexible, have clear, priority-based mandates, and are capable of adjusting to changing realities on the ground. Over the past few months, we have seen efforts undertaken to that end, for example, the development of the mandates for the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic and the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where tasks have been established based on clearly defined priorities. However, much remains to be done.

In addition, once a peacekeeping operation has been deployed with a valid mandate, the Security Council is duty-bound to require and obtain from host States full respect for and compliance with the terms agreed upon in the relevant status of forces agreement. These documents are the guarantees that protect the personnel that a country voluntarily contributes to peacekeeping operations. Therefore, any violation of these agreements is simply unacceptable and cannot be tolerated. Such actions seriously affect the performance of missions and prevent them from faithfully discharging their assigned tasks. I would mention here limitations on the freedom of movement, restrictions on access to certain areas, bureaucratic obstacles with respect to the delivery of visas or the shipping of containers with United Nations equipment, refusal to allow the deployment of new forces, or expulsion of peacekeeping personnel, all of which impede the full functionality of a mission.

Troop- and police-contributing countries must also shoulder their share of the burden, as they are the ones acting on the ground and they have to implement an operation's mandate. It is essential that the deployed peacekeeping personnel is properly trained, skilled and equipped to carry out all of the tasks set forth in the mandate. Therefore, national restrictions — known as caveats — whether they are declared or, worse, undeclared, the absence of effective command and control, the refusal to obey orders, the failure to respond to attacks against civilians and inadequate equipment cannot be tolerated because they have an adverse effect on the shared responsibility for effectively discharging the mandates.

Unfortunately, we have seen this type of situation in several peacekeeping operations, and not only at the level of the contingents and the police forces, but also in the leadership of the missions and their chain of command, especially in high-pressure environments where civilians need protection. On this point, I wish to stress the contribution of the Kigali Principles on the Protection of Civilians, which Uruguay has joined, with the understanding that they recognize the importance the protection of civilians has at present in preserving the physical and moral integrity of people in conflict situations, particularly the most vulnerable populations. My delegation understands that the Kigali Principles can greatly contribute to the reform process because they are geared towards improving efficiency in the protection of civilians, through training, the behaviour of peacekeeping personnel on the ground and the important element of accountability, especially when they do not rise to occasion of the circumstances.

In conclusion, allow me to assure the Council of Uruguay's commitment to continuing to work in the reform process of United Nations peacekeeping operations.

Mr. Iliichev (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We are grateful for the convening of today's meeting and thank Secretary-General António Guterres for sharing his assessment of the situation with respect to United Nations peacekeeping with us.

Peacekeeping is a key instrument in the arsenal of United Nations measures designed to support international peace and security, resolve conflicts and provide support for State-building at the initial post-crisis stage. The increasingly complex character of problems that are spawned by modern crises, the growth in the number and the geographical scope of conflict situations, the rapid political changes, the presence of specific factors that lead to conflict, including terrorism, crime, drug trafficking and other transboundary challenges and threats — all of these point to the need for a transformation of United Nations peacekeeping and raise the issue of the need to enhance its effectiveness.

However, in these difficult conditions, what has not changed is the essence of peacekeeping, namely, that there is no alternative to conflict resolution. It is precisely this priority that the Secretary-General established, and the High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations reached the same conclusion previously. It is not by chance that during today's meeting the organizers of the debate suggested that we focus on the need to enhance the effectiveness of peacekeeping with an emphasis on the political aspects of the peacekeeping missions' actions in the field.

We have to agree that the mandates of some missions have been slow to adapt to new realities on the ground. There is no doubt that there are questions about the effectiveness of the work of the Secretariat on planning the life cycle of missions or the cooperation of missions with the authorities of the host country. It is important to streamline the process of developing an exit strategy and ensuring a smooth transition to the post-conflict rebuilding stage, which would make it possible not only to optimize expenditures but also enhance the effectiveness of peacekeeping operations and their impact.

Furthermore, we believe that it is unacceptable to use the practice of having the Secretariat provide requests with estimates for separate components of peacekeeping operations without sufficient justification for them. Recently, we have also seen the broad artificial expansion of the mandates of peacekeeping operations through the addition of non-core tasks. We have often spoken about the harm of this practice, which significantly reduces the effectiveness of missions.

Let us look at the example of the broadly interpreted tasks of protecting civilians, monitoring human rights, including gender issues, and preventing sexual violence. Those functions are often entrusted to the civilian staff of missions. Deploying and maintaining such personnel is rather expensive. For example, with regard to the Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, almost nearly every one of its components has an expert on outreach to society. There are approximately 30 such experts. Is that really necessary or economically justified?

We are convinced that we should not burden peacekeeping operations with difficultly achieved tasks of a socially humanitarian character. Such factors are not a threat to international peace and security, and come under the purview of other specialized United Nations bodies. It is important to have a carefully balanced approach to dealing with human rights issues in peacekeeping. We do not question the importance of promoting and protecting human rights, but we believe that delegating to United Nations peacekeeping operations human rights functions that fall outside of their field of expertise reduces the effectiveness of achieving their primary goal, which is separating and reconciling the conflicting sides and ultimately saving lives.

It is the successful resolution of a conflict that is the key precondition to improving human rights situations and developing democratic institutions in a specific country, rather than the converse. Excessive attention given to human rights issues often leads to a distorted understanding of the causes of crises and of new challenges and threats, as well as the erroneous interpretation of peacekeeping mission mandates, the lack of their effectiveness and, on occasion, the resultant hostility from host and troop-contributing countries.

There has been an increasing number of proposals to give peacekeeping missions multi-component mandates, including peacebuilding tasks, above all promoting security sector reform, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and support for the restoration of law-enforcement bodies and the rule of law in general. We believe that such tasks should be specifically targeted to the specific causes of conflicts, thereby ensuring that conflicts do not reignite. Peacekeeping personnel cannot be used as a substitute for national authorities or embedded into domestic political situations.

We believe that reducing financing for certain peacekeeping operations should go hand-in-hand with modifying their mandates, in particular with regard to reducing their parallel non-core tasks that only dilute peacekeeping efforts to address the root causes of conflict. Unquestionably, no matter how the transformation of peacekeeping unfolds, the critical guidelines will be the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations and the basic principles of United Nations peacekeeping — the consent of the host country, impartiality and the non-use of force except for self-defence or in order to implement the mandate of the Security Council. Lately, those lements are unfortunately increasingly being considered by some countries almost as an obstacle to implementing missions' mandates. We have heard ideas expressed about the need for their flexible interpretation depending on conditions on the ground. We reiterate, once again, that that is unacceptable. We believe that it is precisely those elements that guarantee the effectiveness of peacekeeping operations. Every new or emerging area of peacekeeping should strictly adhere to those principles.

We also believe that it is important to warn about attempts to artificially politicize the activity of peacekeepers. We are seriously concerned about the attempts to flexibly interpret the norms of international humanitarian law, in particular as pertaining to the protection of civilians in conditions of armed conflict. Under no circumstances should Blue Helmets become party to a conflict or join those parties. That is precisely what would happen if the Security Council adopted certain proposals made by Member States entertaining the possible use of force by peacekeepers against host States.

Any action allegedly guided by the need to protect the civilian population is unacceptable if it is actually intended to achieve narrow express geopolitical aims, especially if such an action is against the legitimate authorities of sovereign States. As has been illustrated by past experience, that leads to more civilian victims. We do not support the view that has often been expressed that the protection of civilians is the goal in itself of peacekeeping operations in general. I would like to recall once again that the need to protect civilians is a consequence of conflict and not the cause of a conflict. Effectively ensuring the security of civilians can be achieved only by dealing with the root causes of conflict. Supporting and protecting civilians can be only a temporary measure so as to provide time to find a political and diplomatic solution.

Moreover, we are concerned about certain questions in the concept paper (S/2017/287, annex) with regard to the possibility of missions carrying out their work without the strategic consent of the host country. We believe that that is inappropriate as it runs contrary to one of the basic inviolable principles of peacekeeping, which cannot be revised. At the same time, the success of United Nations peacekeeping operations depends directly on building constructive and mutually respectful relations with the host country and other national actors. That kind of cooperation must not be imposed or artificial. It must be based on the natural wish of the host country to cooperate, and that is a direct consequence of strengthening trust in the work of the mission and its components.

We should not forget that Governments bear the main responsibility for ensuring the security of their people, including security against terrorist attacks. They also bear the main responsibility for establishing the political process, ensuring development and dealing with the root causes of conflict. The international community should provide support to local and regional efforts, but it should provide substitutes for them.

It is difficult not to agree that the current challenges and threats that have changed the character of conflicts require a corresponding adaptability from the Organization. Competent and thorough political and mediation efforts should be a priority in peacekeeping activities. The history of conflicts in various regions of the world has shown that such efforts help address the root causes of conflicts rather than merely treat their symptoms. Otherwise, crises will resurface after a brief pause. United Nations peacekeeping missions and the Blue Helmets should be deployed in places in which they can effectively help while remaining neutral actors and, at the same time, not undertaking functions that fall outside their field of expertise. In order to enhance the effectiveness of peacekeepers in fulfilling their mandates, we should not consider various generic initiatives but, rather, set realistic and clear goals for Blue Helmets and focus on the specific causes and the core problems that are related to every conflict.

Mr. Rycroft (United Kingdom): I warmly welcome the Secretary-General's briefing. I agree with his nine-point plan for reform and with every other word that he said.

I would like to pay tribute to the brave men and women serving in United Nations peacekeeping missions. For many people around the world, they are all that stands between stability and chaos. More than 3,500 peacekeepers have lost their lives holding that line, including nine this year. We are humbled by their sacrifice.

We have a duty to those peacekeepers, all those risking their lives today and all the people whom they protect, to ask tough, fundamental questions about peacekeeping deployments. Peacekeeping is one of the best things that the Organization has ever established. Peacekeeping is the jewel in the United Nations crown. Peacekeeping is the United Nations unique selling point. Peacekeeping is also a good investment. In human terms, United Nations peacekeeping saves lives. In terms of peace, it significantly increases the survival rate of peace agreements. We should continue to invest in that crucial tool that answers the call to help when no one else comes. But as with all investments, we should examine the market.

First, we must think long and hard before deploying missions and about whether peacekeeping is the right tool at the right moment. Horizon scanning and early warning give us an opportunity to use other tools. Preventive diplomacy, conflict prevention, mediation and early action to prevent conflicts and mass human rights abuses remain vital, but those must be begun long before peacekeepers may be required. Too often that moment is missed. When a peacekeeping mission is required, we must ask if that mission has a clear objective and a clear exit strategy. Does it have the right mandate? Will the host Government cooperate? There are at least two ways in which a Government might not cooperate — by opposing the very deployment of a mission or by hindering the mission's ability to fulfill every part of its mandate once it has been deployed.

History has given us enough tragedies to support the deployment of peacekeepers when host Governments are unwilling or unable to protect their own people— with or without the Government's consent. If the host Government does not cooperate, the Council has a crucial role to play. We must ensure that States shoulder their primary responsibility to prevent conflict, minimize suffering and ensure that cycles of conflict are not repeated. Where there are spoilers to peace, including host Governments that seek to stifle missions, we must use all the tools at our disposal to change that behaviour.

But time after time the message sent by the Council is one of disunity and confusion. We had a chance last year to bring pressure to bear on the parties in South Sudan, but at the crucial moment we failed to deliver. We cannot complain now about the tragic status quo in that country if we are not prepared to act ourselves.

Once deployed, we must recognize when a peacekeeping mission is no longer the right tool for the job, when other parts of the United Nations system are better placed to support development and peacebuilding needs — as in Haiti, Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire. We know that peacekeeping is but one tool available to the United Nations. It cannot deliver every aspect to the United Nations response to conflict. Peacekeeping should exist alongside both conflict prevention and peacebuilding work.

Where military force is necessary, the United Nations is not the only organization capable of delivering it. We need only look to West Africa, where the Economic Community of West African States has demonstrated regional leadership through deployments in Mali and in support of the political transition in the Gambia. Or to Somalia, where the African Union Mission in Somalia is degrading the threat from the terrorist group Al-Shabaab.

But military operations can only create the space for the political process to progress. We must therefore redouble our efforts to address the political challenges to peace — not only the security ones — if we are to deliver the Secretary-General's agenda on sustaining peace.

My final point is that, if and when we deploy peacekeeping missions, we must make sure that they are effective. That means better mission planning, more pledges of troops and equipment and stronger mission performance. Mandates must be limited, realistic and prioritized, with a clear end goal and the benchmarks for getting there, while building on and complementing the work of other parts of the United Nations so that we can measure the impact of their activity and hand them over when the peacekeeping task is complete.

We must conduct regular and robust reviews of missions to establish where current situation sit on the spectrum of conflict and ensure that we are responding and resourcing them appropriately. Pledges of troops and equipment need to meet specific shortfalls identified by the United Nations, including the deployment of more women. We need to develop a greater breadth and depth of capabilities so that the United Nations can deploy the most appropriate tools to deliver mission mandates.

Ultimately, peacekeeping must perform better. That means high-quality training, appropriate equipment, medical provision and skilled and courageous leadership. Missions are the human face of the Organization to so many people in the world. They have to act to uphold the principles that we all represent, while holding peacekeepers to account for underperformance or misconduct, especially when there are allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse. Peacekeepers' successes save lives, and we owe it to them and the people they protect to ask those tough questions and find the right answers.

Mr. Umarov (Kazakhstan): I thank the United States presidency for underscoring the importance of strengthening the political objectives and dimensions of peacekeeping operations. I also thank the Secretary-General for a very innovative and reformist approach to the entire peacekeeping continuum. We fully support his vision to raise the efficiency and effectiveness of peacekeeping operations — one that is both timely and needed.

Recent developments in some operations make this debate even more relevant and timely. Peace and security today are threatened as never before. It is therefore necessary to evaluate how the effectiveness of the operations of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations can be enhanced, especially in the face of asymmetrical conflicts and the rise of terrorism and extreme violence.

Despite those limitations, in many countries peacekeeping operations have helped countries to close the chapter of conflict and open a path to normal development. At the same time, United Nations peacekeeping and the response by the international community as a whole have been challenged and found ineffective in some cases. These setbacks provide important lessons for deciding how and when to deploy, and what structure and streamlining is needed to support United Nations peacekeeping. They also serve as a political tool to restore and maintain international peace and security.

My delegation offers the following observations to ensure a sharper political focus, drawn from current missions as a whole rather than specific cases.

First, peacekeeping, with its operational facets, can never become the overriding focus. It must be considered in conjunction with conflict prevention, peacebuilding and development. Those concerns must all be addressed simultaneously if the root causes of political conflict are to be addressed and the risk of conflicts recurring reduced. All efforts must be based on timely early warning and analysis of the drivers of intra-State or inter-State disputes that escalate into violent conflict.

Second, engaging regional organizations and neighbouring States in resolving conflicts is becoming increasingly important. Recent success stories from the Lake Chad basin and the Great Lakes region, which I visited last month, call for more such joint initiatives by the African Union, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development and the United Nations. Mediation efforts by neighbouring groups of States and Heads of State have yielded considerable success. They will need to be reinforced by the peace missions of the Department of Political Affairs, the collective United Nations multilateral system, media and civil society — as powerful agents of political change.

Third, the General Assembly and its Member States are also positive political influences for funding and bilateral assistance. Political objectives can only be reached if both the host Government and the parties on the ground take ownership and responsibility.

Fourth, political gains can be sustained only if they are supported by disarmament, demobilization and reintegration; security sector and rule-of-law reforms; and the promotion of human rights. Fragile States must be offered security and assistance programmes to promote their social and economic recovery and their long-term development. It is also necessary to consider if guarantees for the safety and security of United Nations personnel can be reasonably obtained from the main parties or factions.

Fifth, while considering new mandates or extending existing ones, the Security Council must take into account whether the parties to a conflict in a country have committed themselves to a peace process and whether a clear political goal is reflected in the mandate. The Secretary-General and the entire United Nations system should call for a periodic strategic assessment to identify all possible options for United Nations engagement, to determine what actions need to be taken when political processes break down and whether the mission should continue.

Sixth, the Security Council will henceforth be expected to monitor peacekeeping operations more closely and on an ongoing basis, considering the present-day growing threats of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant/Da'esh, Al-Qaida, Boko Haram and other violent extremist and armed groups. That raises the questions of whether we have sufficient means and resources to do so and how to proceed.

Seventh, funding must also be considered from the overall security, political, military, humanitarian and human rights conditions on the ground when missions begin and when their mandates are extended. If missions are ended or downsized, we must also consider the consequences of those measures and whether the security vacuum will be filled by terrorist groups. The key question is: How do we prevent such groups from making inroads into new territories, thus creating further regional and global insecurities?

Eighth, recent setbacks in the field provide insight for a thorough ongoing evaluation of mission objectives and their completion. It is critical to design proper exit strategies and alternative future arrangements to ensure stabilization after mission withdrawal. Such a framework is necessary for every mission.

Ninth, we appreciate the immense efforts of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and Department of Field Support to improve the system of force generation. However, there is room for improvement, such as introducing a rotational system for troop-contributing countries (TCCs). This could create a better environment among TCCs and increase the overall effectiveness of field missions.

Political diplomacy and peacekeeping go hand in hand. There is no body parallel to the United Nations, with its peacekeeping operations and its three essential pillars under the Charter. It is thus up to us to see how best we can deploy and support United Nations peacekeeping as one of the invaluable and indispensable tools in the context of the New Agenda for Peace.

Mr. Liu Jieyi (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China welcomes the initiative of the United States to convene this meeting. We thank Secretary-General Guterres for his briefing and for his nine reform points. China supports the Secretary-General's important efforts to enhance United Nations peacekeeping operations.

In the 70 years since their establishment, United Nations peacekeeping operations have played an important role in the maintenance of international peace and security. Given the profound changes in the international situation and the increasing complexity of peacekeeping environments and missions, the effective implementation of peacekeeping operations is facing grave challenges. The international community has high expectations for improving United Nations peacekeeping operations, and in this respect I wish to share the following observations.

First, it is key to abide by the basic principles of peacekeeping operations and handle relations with the host country appropriately. The purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the principles of the consent of the parties, impartiality and the non-use of force except in self-defence or defence of the mandate, otherwise known as the three peacekeeping principles, form the cornerstone of peacekeeping operations and retain an irreplaceable guiding role in the new context.

In carrying out peacekeeping operations, it is important to fully respect the sovereignty of the host country and value its views, assist it in enhancing its security capacity-building, and engage in beneficial interaction with it.

When a host country requests it and the situation allows for the exit of a peacekeeping operation, the Security Council should guide the Secretariat in establishing a clear exit timetable, so as to avoid an indefinite stay on the part of the peacekeeping operation in the host country. Peacekeeping operations must adapt to changing dynamics and adjust their size as appropriate, so as to optimize peacekeeping resource flows and provide tangible assistance to countries with more pressing needs.

Secondly, peacekeeping operations must have clear, actionable and focused mandates. Such operations revolve around the core tasks of conflict resolution and sustaining peace. It is important to plan the mandates of peacekeeping missions with full consideration given to the actual needs of the host country, the security environment on the ground and the capacity of the troop-contributing countries (TCCs), as well as other factors, while adapting its priorities to changing situations at every stage of the mission.

The Secretariat must proceed from the overall perspective and in the long-term interest of maintaining international peace and security, take effective measures to improve the command system for peacekeeping operations, enhance missions' work by improving their efficiency and efficacy and strengthen their ability to respond to complexities so that they can better perform the duties entrusted to them by the Charter of the United Nations.

Thirdly, enhanced communication and coordination with the TCCs is necessary, as they are the main players in peacekeeping operations and have made major contributions and sacrifices to such operations. Peacekeepers from the TCCs have been performing their duties on the front lines and are best informed as to the challenges and difficulties facing them in the fulfilment of their tasks.

The Security Council should enhance communication with TCCs and receive in-depth knowledge of the progress made by peacekeeping operations, the situation in the host country and the difficulties facing TCCs. It must fully respect the views of TCCs and take active measures to enhance the security of peacekeepers and strengthen early-warning capacities with respect to potential security threats, as well as provide enough logistical support to ensure that security and medical equipment, supplies and measures are available.

Nine of the 16 United Nations peacekeeping missions are located in Africa. Twelve of the largest-contributing TCCs are African countries. Enhancing communication and coordination with African countries in the field of peacekeeping and increasing assistance to African countries are imperative in order to effectively improve peacekeeping operations. In recent years, the African Union has been actively committed to enhancing the joint self-reliance of African countries and has achieved considerable success in self-reliant peacekeeping efforts. China has always supported Africa in resolving African issues in an African way. China has always supported the African Union and other regional and subregional organizations in their efforts to play active roles in the resolution of regional issues.

China supports the United Nations in tfurther expanding and deepening its cooperation with the

African Union in the area of peace and security, while listening carefully to the views and concerns of African countries on peacekeeping and actively supporting Africa's peacekeeping capacity-building.

Over the years, African Union-led peacekeeping operations have played a crucial roles. The United Nations should increase its political support to them, provide greater assistance in the areas of staff training, logistical assistance and financial support and give positive consideration to setting up a sustained and stable funding mechanism.

As the biggest TCC among the five permanent members of the Security Council and the second-largest contributor in terms of assessed contributions to United Nations peacekeeping, China has made an important contribution to the cause of United Nations peacekeeping. China is implementing across the board all of the commitments announced by Chinese leaders to further support United Nations peacekeeping operations by actively building up a stand-by peacekeeping force, vigorously advancing the dispatch of helicopters and providing training to peacekeepers from around the world, African countries in particular. China will work to facilitate the China-United Nations peace and development fund's ability to take more concrete action for developing countries, especially African countries, and help Africa to enhance its peacekeeping capacity-building.

China is ready to work together with the broader United Nations membership and make a greater contribution to further improving United Nations peacekeeping operations and better maintain international peace and security.

Mr. Delattre (France) (*spoke in French*): I warmly thank the Secretary-General for his important briefing and assure him of France's full support for the approach that he has just set out. I also thank the American presidency for having convened this meeting. The issue bringing us together today, peacekeeping and the men and women serving in peacekeeping operations — the Blue Helmets — are very much the identity and very face of the United Nations.

I should like to make three specific points.

My first is that United Nations peacekeeping operations save lives every day; their work is invaluable. In the past, in Namibia, Cambodia, El Salvador, Slovenia, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Timor-Leste and Côte d'Ivoire, and today in the Central African Republic, Mali, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, South Sudan, Lebanon and Darfur, Blue Helmets have been preventing clashes, protecting civilians and clearing the way for political processes. They do so at a low cost, because the peacekeeping operations budget accounts for only 0.5 per cent of the world's annual global military expenditure. This is therefore an essential and responsible investment.

The major traumas that have taken place since the Second World War occurred where peacekeeping failed — I am thinking here of Srebrenica and Rwanda — and where peacekeeping was not present, such as in Syria. Those failures are rightly etched into our collective memory. But we all know that Blue Helmet bases frequently represent a vulnerable population's only hope in the face of armed groups that terrorize, loot and kill, their only way out and their only recourse, quite simply, for even a chance at survival. Who else would want or be able to ensure the protection of civilians in so many dangerous theatres? On the other hand, who would want to be responsible for abandoning the peoples of South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo or the Central African Republic to their fate? In that regard, I would like to commend the actions of the almost 110,000 men and women who are deployed and working today to avoid such tragedies, and to pay tribute to the more than 3,400 peacekeepers who have lost their lives on mission since 1948.

My second point is that United Nations peacekeeping is constantly under review and continues to be committed to improving and moving forward. There has been an ongoing focus on improving peacekeeping for years, and much has already been done. The most recent integrated and multidimensional operations are based on a concept whereby their mandates revolve around both immediate and vital priorities, such as the protection of civilians and human rights, and longer-term tasks, such as support to political processes, reforms and the restoration of State authority, which are a guarantee of effectiveness and a successful, sustainable exit from a crisis. Those mandates require an integrated approach on the part of all United Nations actors, including funds, agencies and programmes. The Special Representatives of the Secretary-General have become the conductors orchestrating the continuum of peace, security and development that we try to encourage.

On the operational front, peacekeeping missions are now expected to protect civilians actively and robustly, as the recent actions of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA)have shown. We have been scaling up troops, capacities and leadership, as well as training, equipment, intelligence, medical support, language capacities — which the countries of la Francophonie have worked particularly hard to advance — air support and police components. That list is not exhaustive, but these are all areas that are evolving significantly. This is a big effort, and the troop-contributing countries and the Secretariat have put a great deal into it. Thanks to that progress, United Nations operations can bring the greatest legitimacy and the most comprehensive approach in responding to a conflict. National operations such as those that France is deploying in the Sahel and the Central African Republic can act only as supplements, not substitutes. But the United Nations is not always the right tool or the only one. That is where partnering with regional organizations makes sense, and we support the joint United Nations efforts with the African Union under resolution 2320 (2016), based on comparative advantages and in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations.

Does that mean that all is well? No, but my third point is that we have to make the right diagnoses and be firm in administering the cures. Some difficulties arise from specific situations, while others are more systemic. Sexual abuse has undermined peacekeepers' integrity and their calling as protectors. Serious failures of the imperative to protect civilians, in South Sudan and elsewhere, are still shocking. From maintaining our zero-tolerance policy on sexual abuse to investigating mandate failures, we must do everything possible to correct and prevent such serious dysfunctionality. But overall, our diagnosis must be fair, since some of the structural difficulties of peacekeeping are outside an operation's control. If some remain for too long, or if others seem too timid, that is because they can succeed only if they are based on the triple foundation of a unified Security Council, the joint political willingness of the parties involved to emerge from conflict, and troops who are determined to implement their mandate.

Based on those considerations, France urges that we draw various conclusions that can enable us to continue to adapt peacekeeping to our current challenges. Those conclusions include, first, closing an operation and transferring its responsibilities to the country team when a mandate is fulfilled, as is currently the case with the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire and the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti. To that we could add the United Nations Mission in Liberia and the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo, which have largely achieved their objectives. Drawing the right conclusions also means recognizing that some missions — such as the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali, MINUSCA and the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon — must be maintained because they play a vital role, despite the frustrations that can result from the slow pace of political processes.

Drawing the right conclusions also means continuing to work to ensure that the operations are truly in a position to succeed. There are several elements to that. The first is encouraging the Security Council to be united in directing operations. That support is essential to their success. The second is strengthening our support to political processes, including when they are driven by our regional partners, as in South Sudan. Every effort should be made to ensure coherence in our collective action and in achieving results. We should remember that for those political efforts to succeed, the violence has to stop and civilians have to be protected. The third is structuring relationships with host States so that we can have a genuine exchange of commitments and responsibilities. That is why we support mutual commitment frameworks and making them routine. The fourth is continuing our efforts to give operations the right troops, skills and equipment for their mandates. That requires maintaining a tripartite partnership among the Council, the Secretariat and the troop- and police-contributing countries, to which France is an active contributor. Lastly, drawing the right conclusions means being ambitious and demanding in our efforts to better integrate United Nations peacekeeping into its global environment and the peace continuum that the Secretary-General is promoting, with France's full support.

Why has peacekeeping, which began as an ad hoc concept, seen its ambitions and its resources grow in this way? Because it is a tool for all of us, and because it has been proving its usefulness for 60 years. We commend the significant discussion we have had today — for which I would once again like to thank the United States presidency — since it will enable us to make our collective action stronger and more effective than before.

Mr. Cardi (Italy): I would like to thank you, Madam President, for convening today's debate, and the Secretary-General for his statement, which pointed the way to making the radical changes in peacekeeping missions that can make them more fit for our times.

Italy is a global security provider. We are the top contributor of Blue Helmets among Western countries. In addition, we participate in a range of non-United Nations missions, such as those in Afghanistan, Iraq and Somalia, as well as that fighting human trafficking and terrorism in the Mediterranean.

In a world that has seen a dramatic increase in security challenges, peacekeeping continues to be a crucial tool for maintaining peace and security. We should not forget United Nations peacekeeping's many success stories, which we should be building on. The United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon, for example, plays a fundamental role in its interposition between the parties and as a mediator, through its tripartite mechanism. It is a concrete example of conflict prevention through patience, dedication and continued efforts by the parties and of a mission that makes a huge contribution to regional stability. In West Africa — in Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire — peace missions achieved their goals thanks also to the political dimension of the United Nations presence, to a coordinated action at the regional level and to the critical role of the Economic Community of West African States and the United Nations Office for West Africa.

As Secretary-General underlined, we need a more holistic approach to peace. Peace operations should be seen in the broader context of prevention, peacebuilding, sustaining peace and post-conflict stabilization, in a sort of peace continuum where the quest for political solutions must be a primary goal. Yet, of course, resources are limited and should be utilized in a cost-effective way, including by progressively closing the gap between the resources the Organization spends on peacekeeping — almost $8 billion — and the budget for mediation and special political missions, which is about $600 million.

We agree that peacekeeping missions should be regularly reviewed to assess their effectiveness, adherence to their mandates and the need for adjustments to address evolving situations. However, when examining or phasing out peacekeeping missions, we should avoid decisions driven only by the need to reduce costs, and avoid early disengagement that may lead to a redeployment of new missions in a deteriorating environment, as was the case in the past. Strategic patience should be at the core of our evaluations.

Peace operations should be shaped by four main principles. The first is the primacy of politics and the centrality of the people. A peacekeeping mission should have as a core objective the support for inclusive political processes aimed at national dialogue and reconciliation. Protecting civilians in conformity with the Kigali Principles, to which Italy subscribed, must also be one of its main functions.

The second principle is mandates. We should define an entry strategy, attainable objectives and measurable benchmarks for all the parties involved. Clear benchmarks for launching a responsible exit strategy should be provided at the outset. Sequenced benchmarks linked to political progress in the country should be established, as well as local ownership of stabilization to prevent dependency of the country on a mission. Mandates of course should also be flexible to evolve as the situation evolves. We should not refrain when possible from phasing out a military mission with a more agile and light-footprint mission based on specialized police units and civilian units focused on stabilization, the rule of law, justice and the protection of civilians.

Thirdly, the involvement of regional actors and the role of regional and subregional organizations are key to establishing an effective and successful political process. In that regard, I wish to mention the report (see S/2008/813) prepared in December 2008 by the group of experts chaired by Romano Prodi, which called for predictable financial support for United Nations-approved African Union peacekeeping missions. In that context, the European Union can also have a major role to play in complementing United Nations efforts on the ground, improving cooperation on mandates and mission planning and concluding agreements to operate jointly with the United Nations, as is already the case in Mali, in the Sahel, and in the Central African Republic.

Fourthly, if we talk about efficiency, intelligence, equipment and training are essential. Technological innovation in particular is crucial to improving the performance of peace missions and increasing the security of peacekeepers, as highlighted by the use of unmanned aerial vehicles in the United Nations

Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which Italy first provided to the mission several years ago.

Finally, training, in particular predeployment and mandate-oriented training, is key. There must be a strong commitment to achieving the highest standards of conduct of United Nations peacekeepers, promoting initiatives between countries, providing training to troop- and police-contributing countries (TCCs and PCCs) and donors, including efforts to prevent sexual abuse and exploitation. The long-term challenge consists of promoting the self-sufficiency of TCCs and PCCs. In that regard, allow me to recall Italy's role as a training and logistical hub, thanks to its facilities in Vicenza, in joint venture with the United States, in Brindisi, the Global Service Centre, and in Turin, the United Nations Staff College.

In conclusion, I wish like others to pay tribute to the women and men serving in United Nations peacekeeping missions, and in particular to those who have lost their lives over the years.

Mr. Yelchenko (Ukraine): I wish to thank you, Madam President, for the timely initiative and the opportunity to have a fruitful discussion on the flagship United Nations activity, namely, its peacekeeping operations. We also commend the Secretary-General for continuing the practice of personal briefings to the Security Council on various critical issues of international peace and security.

It is common wisdom that these days the world is an increasingly dangerous place to live in, warranting more and not less engagement of the United Nations in the area of peace and security. Ukraine, as an active troop- and police-contributor and a country where a foreign-led armed conflict continues to rage, views the issue of maintaining peace and conflict prevention as the most important task of the Organization.

Over the years, peace operations have proved to be an adaptive instrument and contributed to the resolution of numerous conflicts. A number of United Nations peacekeeping success stories have contributed to an increase in demand for United Nations peacekeeping operations, leading to their significant expansion in size, geography, budget and resources as well as in mandates.

Following the report (see S/2015/446) of the High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations, various aspects of peacekeeping operations have been extensively debated both by the General Assembly and the Security Council. We fully share the view that lasting peace is achieved not through military but political solutions. United Nations peacekeeping operations are merely one of the tools to achieve adequate conditions on the ground for advancing a respective peace process.

Peacekeeping operations are a tool, and not a solution, for conflicts. Yet sustainable de-escalation and progress in peaceful settlement and peacebuilding, including holding elections, are not possible without a robust international security presence capable of ensuring and monitoring implementation of all security-related provisions until the legitimate security sector and law-enforcement institutions are established or restored. That is why today United Nations peacekeepers are expected to deliver more. That is why the task of protecting civilians has evolved into an integral part of United Nations peacekeeping. Performance in this area is often decisive for the success and legitimacy of a peace process.

Therefore, even in situations when political negotiations are in a stalemate, peacekeeping operations continue to play an important stabilizing role and should be provided with adequate technical, human and financial resources. If a peacekeeping operation loses the trust of a local population, the political process has minimal chances of succeeding. In that regard, we fully agree with the need to identify the missions that are in need of structural reform and to thoroughly consider every mission's mandate and monitor the efficiency of its implementation, with a focus on the protection of civilians and achieving a political solution. We believe that missions should be provided with clear, coherent, achievable and, at the same time, resilient mandates sufficient to ensure the security and safety of civilians, including stopping illegal inflows of weapons and mercenaries.

Taking into account that the security situation on the ground in conflict areas can change swiftly and dramatically, such mandates should include provisions enabling peacekeeping operations to use force in circumstances of direct threat to its personnel or civilians, including terrorist threats. The Security Council as the one and only United Nations peacekeeping-operations-mandating body should be up to this task.

Another crucial aspect is the timely transition from peacekeeping operations to other forms of United Nations presence. We have witnessed a success story in the steady restoration of peace in Côte d'Ivoire. Ukraine is proud to be among those troop-contributing countries that have actively contributed to this endeavour by supporting the United Nations operation in that country. In that regard, one can clearly see how success is achieved through carefully gauging the nature and strength of United Nations involvement against progress in consolidating stability and peace. We also believe the same approach should be applied to Liberia, which is already on its way forward, assuming full responsibility for its security from the United Nations Mission in Liberia.

Speaking of the right toolbox, United Nations peacekeeping today is trying to address challenges of the twenty-first century using tools from the twentieth century. I would not be divulging a big secret if I said that sometimes United Nations peacekeepers are underequipped and poorly informed, and therefore may refrain from intervening even in the face of terrible atrocities.

As the world's technological revolution continues, the cliché image of a typical United Nations peacekeeper remains that of a soldier in a blue helmet with binoculars. It is high time to transition from traditional peacekeeping to smart, cost-effective peacekeeping by introducing modern technology, from data-gathering to remote observation and non-lethal weapons. That could be of great help with regard to the protection of civilians and, indeed, the entire scope of peacekeeping mandates.

Many of those issues were reflected in the report of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (see S/2015/446) and the report of the Expert Panel on Technology and Innovation in United Nations Peacekeeping in 2015. However, besides the introduction of unmanned aircraft in two missions and surveillance balloons in one capital, not much has been implemented since then. Soldiers with binoculars remain. It would seem appropriate to request of the Secretary-General to report on the implementation of the Panels' recommendations and prepare a study on the comparative cost effectiveness of digital vis-à-vis traditional peacekeeping. We are confident that the United Nations could benefit immensely from a plethora of technologies to assist peace operations. Missing such opportunities means missing chances for peace, as has happened far too often in the past when the United Nations was ill-equipped to carry out difficult mandates.

One more issue that we should not overlook is overreliance on United Nations mission support. However, in that regard as well, we have to implement a long-term approach. In some cases, host countries are becoming dependent upon a United Nations presence, while in others missions's long-lasting life cycles might be a sign of their indispensable role as a local and regional factor in security issues. We share the vision that our main goal should be to ensure that every United Nations mission is a success story rather than an endless process with no light at the end of the tunnel.

Last but not least, over the past decade, the role of the relevant regional arrangements in promoting peace and security has only expanded. The engagement of the Economic Community of West African States in the Gambian post-electoral crisis is the most recent case in point. The United Nations should therefore build and enhance its strategic partnership with regional organizations by working in concert with them and using the comparative advantage of each actor in peacekeeping and conflict management. If there is a conclusion from the open debate on conflicts in Europe organized by the Ukrainian presidency in February (see S/PV.7886) from which the Council should benefit, it is that kind of interaction is more important today than ever before for cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the European Union and NATO.

In conclusion, I would like to reaffirm the commitment of Ukraine to strengthening United Nations peacekeeping operations, and accordingly its readiness to work constructively with all parties involved.

Mr. Alemu (Ethiopia): I would like to begin by thanking you, Madam President, for organizing this important meeting. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his useful briefing and, frankly, for having been such a driving force for the revitalization of the United Nations, including in the area of peace and security.

This meeting has certainly attracted a lot of attention within the broader membership of the United Nations. It has also already stimulated interesting discussions among members of the media, academia and civil society organizations. That is indeed a good thing, and we are among those who truly believe that there is a need for a frank discussion on reforming

United Nations peacekeeping operations to make them fit for purpose.

We thank the United States presidency for the concept paper (S/2017/287, annex) framing the topic for our discussion, which we have found useful and carefully crafted.

What we are discussing today is critical for the lead role that the United Nations plays in ensuring international peace and security. That has been a recurring theme in the Security Council. Without any doubt, the whole membership of the United Nations has agreed upon the need to reform peacekeeping. Approximately two years ago, we undertook a major review of peace operations in all their aspects. That was done in close consultation with all Member States and other relevant stakeholders. What essentially guided that major review process was indeed the absolute need for United Nations peacekeeping operations to change, adapt to new circumstances and ensure their increased future effectiveness and appropriate use.

In our opinion, the outcome of the review certainly lived up to expectations in making an array of important recommendations aimed at enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of peace operations both at the strategic and operational levels. We believe that the outcome of the review has also raised the extremely pertinent and serious questions that have been brought up by the concept paper, and the review covered much ground in responding to those queries. It therefore appears to us that this meeting affords us a great opportunity to lay a strong foundation for the implementation of most of the recommendations that are contained in the report of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (HIPPO) (see S/2015/446).

We have a Secretary-General who is truly committed to implementing the necessary structural reforms in line with the HIPPO recommendations, and who has already begun to take concrete steps in the direction of improving the peace and security architecture of the United Nations so as to make it fit for purpose and deliver results in the most efficient and cost-effective manner.

We should be expected to support him because some of those important reforms cannot be carried out without bringing all Member States on board. Unquestionably, that is frustrating as building the necessary consensus is never easy, but it is absolutely necessary because, as the High-level Independent Panel rightly noted,

> "Many of the constraints to improving peace operations are political in nature, and can be addressed through political will to find compromise and to respond to long-standing challenges" (*S/2015/446, p. 16*).

There is therefore a need to work in close consultation and partnership with troop-contributing countries and other relevant stakeholders.

In the context of our discussion today, I would like to bring up two points. Although they are not new ideas, we feel that they should be underlined. We need to have a clear political strategy to effectively respond to the peace and security challenges affecting us today. The significance of investing in prevention has long been evident. It is not only a matter of being cost-effective; most important, it is a matter of saving lives. That was the primary reason for the establishment of the Organization — to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war.

Whenever the need arises, we should be able to use the range of tools available in a pragmatic and flexible manner while taking into account the realities on the ground. Peace operations have been and continue to be one of the most important tools in the promotion and maintenance of international peace and security. If peace operations are guided by a clear political strategy attuned to specific conflict situations, they can indeed deliver better results. The same is true with regard to any given exit strategy, which should be appropriately aligned with the transition from conflict to sustainable peace.

In all our efforts to ensure greater efficiency and effectiveness of peace operations, we should therefore be cognizant of the specific context in which such missions operate and the strategy at stake. There should be no one-size-fits-all approach, which could have undesirable consequences. We may perhaps need to look at how the strategic reviews of missions are conducted. There is a feeling that such reviews could be improved to realize their goals.

The other important point that needs to be stressed is the need for global regional partnerships, which is no longer a matter of choice but of necessity. That has been a topic of discussion in the Council, and it is encouraging to know that there is now a greater appreciation of that important reality. Such partnerships are unquestionably instrumental not only in enhancing the responsiveness of the United Nations to address conflict situations, but also in ensuring greater efficiency and effectiveness.

Finally, as one of the leading troop-contributing countries, we definitely attach great importance to strengthening United Nations peace operations in all their aspects. Our long-standing contribution to United Nations peacekeeping operations is dictated by a strong conviction because of our history in multilateralism and collective security. This is attested to by our track record of the past 70 years, as well as by the performance of the thousands of our peacekeepers who are currently operating in some of the most volatile conflict situations, making sacrifices for the cause of regional and international peace and security. This, by the way, began in the early 1950s, when, as the representative of France said, peacekeeping was only an ad hoc concept, in its infancy.

Ethiopia is ready to look at the possibility of hosting a high-level open debate at the level of Heads of State and Government in September, during its presidency of the Council, two years after the high-level review on peace operations, with a view to facilitating serious discussions and follow-up of the implementation of the recommendations of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations and charting the best way forward.

Mr. Bessho (Japan): I thank the presidency for its initiative in convening this briefing today. I also thank Secretary-General Guterres for his informative briefing.

Japan is deeply committed to United Nations peacekeeping and is the third-largest contributor to its budget. We are eager to discuss how this vital tool for international peace and stability can deliver the greatest impact on the ground.

Our goal in reviewing peacekeeping operations should be to ensure that peacekeeping achieves results consistently. It is thus our essential task to undertake serious, well-informed discussions to determine in concrete terms what we want each mission to deliver.

Today's discussion must be put into context: while we should always seek to improve the efficiency of United Nations peacekeeping, overall it is a cost-effective tool. To give just one example, an analysis carried out by the United States Government Accountability Office in 2006 found that the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti was costing less than half of what a United States operation of equal size and duration would have required. Our priority is not to simply scale back or downsize peacekeeping, but to ensure that it is effectively employed where it can make a difference with limited resources.

In the process of reviewing operations, some improvements may take time. But one measure we can implement this very day is to hold more in-depth discussions in the Council on the mandates that we authorize. We tend to add on different capacities to missions in response to individual circumstances, but we must stop to reflect on this habit. The Council has the primary responsibility to identify a mission's core objective and priorities through focused discussions. The clarity and effectiveness of mandates, and thus of peacekeeping itself, stem from the quality of such discussions. This requires us to methodically review and analyse information from the field, troop-contributing countries and the Secretariat. A recent good example is the extensive discussion on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo between Council members and troop-contributing countries, which resulted in a clearer and better-prioritized mandate.

We must assess whether the continued deployment of a given peacekeeping operation fits the reality on the ground. We often hear that shrinking mandates or troop levels can undermine peace and security if the timing is not right. But this cannot be an excuse for status quo mandate rollovers without serious consideration. We need deeper discussions in the Council to link political processes closely to mandates. We should also consider whether the timing of deployment is appropriate in the conflict spectrum.

We must be prepared to constructively discuss peacekeeping exit strategies with an understanding of the context on the ground, including what would follow on from a premature withdrawal where political solutions are elusive. In doing so, the Council should explore enhanced coordination with the Peacebuilding Commission, which can play an important role in the transition from peacekeeping to post-conflict recovery.

As one means of making peacekeeping even more cost-effective, Japan proposes that we further explore coordinated initiatives to increase personnel capabilities across missions. Individual troop-contributing countries are responsible for ensuring high troop standards, but in many cases enhanced capacity through additional training can be beneficial. Triangular cooperation among the Secretariat, troop-contributing countries and a third country such as Japan can help ensure that peacekeepers are well prepared for the field. Standardizing this practice could be one way of guaranteeing that missions consistently receive the best personnel to complete their mandates.

We must use United Nations peacekeeping even more effectively so that this vital tool can continue to protect the most vulnerable while fitting into a broader framework for sustaining peace that is built on the pillars of peace and security, human rights and development. There are, naturally, many views on how this can best be accomplished. Japan hopes that today's briefing will mark the start of more in-depth Council discussions involving a wide range of stakeholders on each mission and mandate.

Mr. Llorenty Solíz (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): Bolivia would like to thank the Secretary-General for his briefing provided today on peacekeeping operations. I should like also to thank the presidency for having convened this debate, at which we can discuss the relevance of current peacekeeping operations and ask ourselves whether these in their current format continue to be the best mechanism that we have to ensure international peace and security.

First of all, I would like to underscore the importance of peacekeeping operations. Today this is the most important instrument at our disposal to maintain peace in places where it is most needed. By the same token, we would like to underscore and pay tribute to the key role played by the troops, military observers, police and civilian personnel that compose the various missions. These men and women are on the ground risking their lives every day to ensure that the various missions can fulfil the goals and tasks with which we have entrusted them. With this in mind, I should like to thank each one of these individuals for their work; we hope that they return safe and sound to their homes after having fulfilled their mission.

It is important to recall that peacekeeping operations are slightly less than 70 years old and that in all this time some 69 missions have been deployed, of which 16 continue to be operational today. Among the most notable successes of the Organization are missions that have contributed to ending conflicts and promoting reconciliation, including in countries of our region such as El Salvador and Guatemala. They have also contributed to stabilizing Haiti.

The Plurinational State of Bolivia has been working for 20 years with the United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations. In 1997, the Organization signed an agreement with Bolivia under which it became a troop-contributing country. In 1999, we sent a 70-soldier component to cooperate in the work of closing down the operations of the United Nations Observer Mission in Angola; it fulfilled that mission in full.

Bolivia also took part as a troop-contributing country in the United Nations Mission in the Democratic Republic ofCongo, which was in succeeded by the current one, the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and in the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti. In each one of these missions, Bolivian troops acted with the greatest professionalism, always respecting the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and acting in the framework of international law. Bolivia currently contributes military observers to four of the 16 existing missions. We are committed to helping all of them achieve their objectives and, to that end, our personnel act based on the principles I have mentioned.

The United States delegation, which organized today's meeting, encouraged Council members to focus on whether our peacekeeping operations, as they are currently constituted, are still the mechanism best suited to meeting the needs of the people on the ground and achieving the Council's political goals. That is why it is important that we question the current value of every one of our peacekeeping operations. There are three points we should consider in that regard. The first is the political support that every mission needs, from the Government of the country where it is deployed, from other Governments in the region and from the international community in general. The second is that we must always keep in mind the reason that each mission was deployed in the first place. And the third is that we must always keep each mission's specific mandates and goals in the forefront of our minds.

Where the first point is concerned, Bolivia believes that every mission should have the political support of the country or countries where it is deployed. It is impossible to imagine a positive outcome, even when a mission is complying with its mandate, if it cannot depend on the consent of the main parties in every situation. Should that be the case, the mandate would have to be restructured, even to the extent of questioning its very existence if for one reason or another it cannot rely on the consent of the parties.

That brings me to my second point, which is that for missions to be seen as legitimate by the parties to the conflict, it is essential that they are working for the purposes for which they were conceived and are upholding the principles of our peacekeeping operations. They should therefore be impartial and serve only to help build a lasting peace. They should never be seen or used as an intervention force or be used to help justify regime change. Every peacekeeping operation should respect the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of the countries in which it intervenes.

With regard to my third point, it is vital for a mission to always have a clear, measurable and achievable mandate. We must use the tools available to us, such as monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, to ensure that missions are meeting their goals and fulfilling their mandates. If for any reason they are not, they must be evaluated and their mandates reconfigured. The part of the United Nations system that includes peacekeeping operations has ended up in a vicious circle of self-perpetuating bureaucracies where mandates have become distorted and the bureaucracy has become an end in itself. In other words, we find ourselves in a situation where we see no way out and renew the mandates every year simply to avoid further complications. It is therefore crucial that every peacekeeping operation have a maximum lifespan, after which it must, of course, be evaluated and shut down. If the conflict is still going, a new mission should be established, with new mandates and new goals that should be measurable and achievable in the time allowed.

Before I conclude, I should make one last point, which deserves the Council's full attention, although it is unrelated to the previous ones. It is the issue of the damage that peacekeeping operations themselves can do, such as in the case of the cholera epidemic that has affected Haiti in the past few years, and for whose initial outbreak the Organization has already admitted a degree of responsibility. It is important to ensure that missions always coordinate with local authorities on planning and staffing issues.

Lastly, I would like to emphasize that the Plurinational State of Bolivia fully supports the efforts of every peacekeeping operation and is very grateful to their personnel for their work and the sacrifices they make.

Mr. Skoog (Sweden): I would like to thank you, Madam President, for organizing and taking the initiative in today's important debate. It comes at a significant moment. The range and nature of threats to international peace and security are evolving and multiplying and, as the Secretary-General has told us, the United Nations must make changes to its "culture, strategy, structures and operations" in order to respond to those new challenges.

Peacekeeping is an essential, unique and, by many measurements, successful instrument in the peace-and-security toolbox of the United Nations. However, in this day and age, for the Organization to live up to the commitment in the Charter of the United Nations to maintaining peace and security, those operations must not only become more effective, they must improve the contribution they make to sustainable peace. We should also bear in mind that resources are finite and should be used as efficiently as possible — although the starting point is about saving lives, not money. And in order to save lives, we have to prevent and solve conflicts. For that reason, the focus in today's discussion, on the political foundations necessary for peacekeeping operations to succeed, is particularly valuable.

The findings of the three 2015 reviews of the United Nations peace and security architecture all agree on the need for reform and provide a road map to achieve it. It is now time to follow through on their recommendations. At the heart of the reviews is a clear understanding that the United Nations must take a more holistic approach to maintaining peace and security. We welcome the work that is already under way, including the internal review of the Secretariat's peace and security architecture. We hope it will result in a United Nations equipped to respond in a system-wide, well-coordinated fashion to threats to peace and security. We support the nine areas for focusing on reform that the Secretary-General put forward this afternoon, and I would like to elaborate a little on some of them.

First, almost every day the Council hears that there are no military solutions to a particular conflict, and in that regard we must recognize the primacy of politics — meaning that peace can be delivered only on the basis of political solutions that aim to sustain peace. That should guide all peace operations and is also crucial to the protection of civilians. Building effective political strategies requires a thorough understanding of a particular conflict and its context. It means sometimes asking difficult questions for which the answers will be unique to that particular setting. The Council must therefore be supported in its work and receive input from the Secretary-General with reliable, high-quality conflict analysis, prepared jointly by the whole of the United Nations system. Secretariat briefings should give more comprehensive overviews of a situation, so as to enable the Council to make better-informed decisions. Strategic reviews conducted in advance of mandate renewals should include clear options to help inform Council decisions.

Secondly, the mandates adopted by the Council should be truly fit for purpose. Agreeing on more realistic, context-tailored and flexible mandates will make successful outcomes more likely. Within mandates, tasks should be prioritized, sequenced and adjusted over time. Exit strategies and transitional phases of peacekeeping operations should be analysed and planned at an early stage, in cooperation with all the relevant actors. It is important to understand what success will look like by including clear and measurable objectives accompanied by benchmarks for progress. We should not be afraid to review mandates regularly and make course corrections when needed. Clear objectives and benchmarks are also an important tool for dialogue with the host country, which is crucial. A good example is the Mutual Commitment Framework between the Central African Republic and the international community, in which the responsibilities are clearly delineated and demonstrate what all involved have to bring to the table to deliver peace.

Thirdly, in order to improve the prevention of conflict and the promotion of long-term stability, the Council and the United Nations as a whole must consider all the tools in the toolbox. They should be used more strategically in support of identified political objectives, with the whole of the United Nations system acting in a holistic manner in support of countries. Increased coherence between peacekeeping operations and the United Nations development and humanitarian systems is therefore critical. Police capabilities play an essential role, distinct from that of the military, and should also be integrated. Broader strategies that address the peace continuum should be inclusive and based on full respect for human rights and international humanitarian law. And, as we all know but still do not always achieve, and as the Secretary-General rightly said, the inclusion and effective participation of women is key. Regional actors that undertake missions on behalf of the Council, such as the African Union Mission in Somalia, are indispensable, and must be supported, including through predictable financing.

Lastly, the dialogue between the Security Council and the troop- and police-contributing countries should be strengthened and made more dynamic both for the design and the implementation of mandates. The experiences of those countries are an invaluable source of information for the Council. In addition to listening, the Council should ensure that United Nations troops and police better reflect the diversity of the States Members of the United Nations, meet the requirements and standards and deliver on the task set out in mandates, which requires contributing countries to declare any caveats. Furthermore, the capacity-building needs of peacekeeping should be assessed and supported.

I wish to stress that every peacekeeper and every peacekeeping operation must do all they can when civilians are under imminent threat. And of course, there must be zero tolerance for sexual exploitation and abuse, as the Secretary-General underlined.

The Charter of the United Nations sets forth our commitment to join our strengths in order to maintain international peace and security. Peacekeeping operations are perhaps the most tangible symbol of this objective. In this period of new challenges, we stand ready to work with the Secretary-General, on the Security Council and with the broader United Nations membership to ensure the most effective operations possible.

Mr. Abdoulatta (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): First, let me extend our thanks to the American presidency of the Security Council for holding today's important debate.

The changing security environment and the complex nature of conflicts make it imperative that we reconsider the effectiveness and utility of tools available for the Security Council to prevent, manage and settle disputes. There is no doubt that peacekeeping operations are among the most important of those tools, which makes it all the more important that we review them so that we can maintain their effectiveness and credibility.

We thank the Secretary-General for his statement and would like to affirm to him that we support all the principles that he suggested.

We welcome the presidency's initiative to shed light on the need to review current mandates to develop and reinforce them. This will help a recommitment to ending conflicts that have gone on for far too long, where some peacekeeping operations have become mere symbols of the inability of the international community to effectively contribute to a final settlement of decades-old disputes.

Consequently, we do not necessarily consider the objective of review as simply an exercise in cost-cutting or achieving significant savings in peacekeeping operation budgets. If we agree that the objective of this review is to find ways of bolstering the effectiveness of peacekeeping operations by making them more purposeful, then we believe that we need to undertake a careful analysis of the political, security and regional environments of peacekeeping operations. In addition, we need to evaluate the effectiveness and impact of the attendant tools of regional political initiatives and sanction regimes.

Peacekeeping operations must be approached from the perspective of the continuum of response to conflicts, which means that operation mandates must be developed in a context of ongoing engagement that includes integrated, physical operational and pragmatic approaches, within, of course, the specific context under consideration. Mandates must be restructured or realigned continuously in response to political and operational developments.

It is also important that assessments be based on elements that were proved necessary for the success of those missions, including, for instance, a political process that is supported regionally and internationally, such as the current African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur. This was also the case for Sierra Leone, Timor-Leste and Côte d'Ivoire before the closure of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone, the United Nations Integrated Mission in Timor-Leste and the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire, respectively. These were operations that were deemed successful.

Meanwhile, exit strategies for the United Nations Mission in Liberia and the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti provide two examples where there is no need for an extensive United Nations security presence under a peacekeeping-operation mandate. Rather, the United Nations presence should address the needs of sustaining peacebuilding and reinforcing national capacity-building to enable States and societies to own and develop mechanisms that plant the seeds of conflict prevention.

In addition to a credible framework as one of the conditions for the success of peacekeeping operations, maintaining the trust of the host country in the credibility of the United Nations mission and the resulting cooperation that would lead to the success of such mission must remain a major focus in assessing the relevance of a certain peacekeeping operation to United Nations engagement in settlement efforts. A poignant reminder of the importance of this perspective is seen in the challenges faced by the United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan. In addition, relations between the Congolese Government with the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Malian Government with the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali went through critical stages that had a negative impact on the performance and effectiveness of the two missions, which prompted a realignment and restructuring of the missions' roles to make them more responsive to the needs and developments in the two countries.

The previous examples clearly show that the effectiveness and function of peacekeeping operations is a dynamic process requiring an integrated multidimensional assessment and constant revision of a mission's role, mandate and structure. Consequently, no effective review of peacekeeping operations and their development can be undertaken without first reviewing the peace and security architecture of the United Nations, including the United Nations role in sustaining peace by integrating the roles of all United Nations and international bodies' programmes and agencies. This is why the Peacebuilding Commission can play an increasingly important advisory role, as far as every conflict is concerned, in helping the Security Council realign mandates with the comprehensive vision of sustaining peace and addressing the root causes of conflicts.

Close consultations with troop-contributing countries are of the utmost importance, especially during the mandate-design and review stages, in order to incorporate field experience into every mandate in line with the concept of participation and collective ownership of mandates. For this particular reason, the tripartite consultation mechanism among the Security Council, troop-contributing countries and the Secretariat must be leveraged across deployed missions.

I would like to make six points that we think will contribute to effective mandates in future peacekeeping operations.

First, peacekeeping operations must not be burdened by unrealistic tasks that exceed their capacity and fail to recognize political and operational realities.

Secondly, exit strategies must be worked out in the early stages of mandate development based on clear benchmarks and a specific time frame. These elements should be reviewed periodically to allow the Council to recalibrate the mandate in line with recent developments.

Thirdly, a strategic partnership with the host country must be established and focus on national ownership of dialogue and reconciliation efforts and improved communication to build mutual trust. Such an environment would greatly contribute to the success of the mission while avoiding any obstacles.

Fourthly, sufficient attention must be given to the building of national security capacity to allow the State to assume the responsibility of protecting civilians. Such an approach would eliminate the culture of overdependency by the host country on the police and military components of the mission, which makes it more difficult to end a mandate when the time comes.

Fifthly, synergies and complementaries must be encouraged between the United Nations and regional organizations and arrangements in the area of conflict resolution, based on the comparative advantages of each. A case in point is the potential opportunity of a partnership with the African Union to address the crises of the continent, although the future of such a partnership depends upon African peace support operations having access to the budget of United Nations peacekeeping operations.

Sixthly, new input must be given to the partnership between the Secretariat and troop-contributing countries when implementing the zero-tolerance policy to combat sexual exploitation and abuse in peacekeeping operations in line with the general framework endorsed by the General Assembly pursuant to resolution 71/278.

Egypt is a major contributor to United Nations peacekeeping operations. As such, we have offered to host the 2018 ministerial meeting on peacekeeping operations. We look forward to cooperating with the Security Council, the Secretariat and troop-contributing countries so that the meeting will represent a qualitative leap in our common effort to develop United Nations peacekeeping operations.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my national capacity as the representative of the United States.

I would like to thank the Secretary-General for taking the time to come and talk to us about peacekeeping and, more important, for his efforts and willingness to look at peacekeeping reform in a way in which we can make it more effective for those who need it.

I also would like to thank my colleagues for participating in this important discussion. I think that so much of what they said was valuable but, more important, there is a collective effort to reform peacekeeping so that it does more for people on the ground in a manner in which it is not only efficient but effective. I thank them for taking the time to do that.

If asked what the United Nations does, the average person would most likely say peacekeeping. The Blue Helmet is the most recognizable symbol of how the United Nations extends its presence and shows value in the world. With more than a 100,000 total personnel and a budget close to $8 billion, peacekeeping is the United Nations most powerful tool to promote international peace and security. We recognize in particular the courage of those men and women who risk their lives serving in peacekeeping missions, and we pay tribute to the more than 3,500 peacekeepers who have lost their lives to keep others safe. By drawing troops and resources from many countries, peacekeeping helps share the burden of promoting global security. When peacekeeping works well, we see countries that have been able to end internal conflicts, re-establish democratic political processes and develop their own capacities to protect their people.

I think that we can all agree that peacekeeping is far from perfect. Many of the Security Council's past discussions on reform focused on operations and efficiency issues, and that is all extremely important. Those efforts need to continue but, when I think about United Nations peacekeeping, I go back to what I learned as a young accountant: go back to the basics and ensure that there are measurables and accountability. We need to work smarter. We need to show results. We need to find value, and not just financial value. We need to focus on what the original intent was. Are we actually on track in accomplishing that intent? Are we meeting the needs of the people?

Because we cannot continue these massive missions forever, we need to focus on the people whom we are supposed to lift up, the peacekeepers who lack the support or the direction that they need and the taxpayers who pay the bills. The simple fact is that, in many cases, United Nations peacekeeping is just not working. In Darfur, a 17,000-strong force designed for yesterday's challenges is not built for the needs of today. In South Sudan, where United Nations staff helped save hundreds of thousands of civilians, those vulnerable people have no hope of returning to a normal life. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Government uses the United Nations to neutralize only the armed groups that it wants, while leaving others untouched. Outside of Africa, we have our mission in Kosovo that, if we are honest with ourselves, has no real reason for being.

The risk is that of creating an artificial, subsidized peace that discourages real home-grown resolutions to those crises. That is why we need to think and why we need this kind of honest strategic review. We invite Council members to join us in evaluating each of our peacekeeping missions as their mandates are renewed. Our goal is to identify those missions that lack the underlying political conditions for a resolution, which numerous studies have concluded is central to mission success. To help guide us, we have developed a set of principles to which, we think, missions should be held.

We have already touched on the first principle, which is that missions must support political solutions. The mission in South Sudan, for example, involves a Government entangled in a civil war. At this time there's no credible political path to peace. The Government lacks the incentive to end the conflict, and has made the job more difficult for our peacekeepers. We cannot manage our way out of that problem. While it may be easier to accept and prolong the status quo, we are not doing ourselves or the people on the ground any favours. The Council must commit to bringing its political pressure to bear on non-cooperative Governments.

The second principle is also fundamental. We need host-country cooperation. This is not to say that the Council should shy away from countries in which it is not welcome or forego to exercise its right as mandated by the Charter of the United Nations to intervene when needed. But we need to acknowledge that, time and again, missions have failed to help those on the ground when host Government's chose to obstruct them. In Darfur, the Government sought to restrict our peacekeepers from day one. It delayed visas, prevented freedom of movement and delayed customs clearance for food and equipment. The mission has suffered, which means that the people on the ground have suffered.

Thirdly, peacekeeping mandates must be realistic and achievable. Mandates should be targeted to the challenges facing the country and given the resources and the capabilities to do the job. At the same time, we must avoid mission creep. It is common practice for missions to gradually snowball over time as they pick up increasing tasks and staff. What we end up with is a monster mission with unclear priorities or reporting lines. In Lebanon, for instance, the mission does critical work to maintain stability along the Blue Line but, beyond those core-monitoring tasks, the mission does everything from publishing magazines to providing a navy.

Fourthly, we must have an exit strategy. We should agree early on what success looks like, how to achieve it and how to set the country or region on the path to independence from the mission. These strategies should be considered at the earliest stages of mission planning and should be central to United Nations regular reporting.

Lastly, we must be willing to adjust mandates both when situations improve and when they fail to improve. Lifting up the people of those regions must be our objective. When this is achieved, institutional inertia cannot be allowed to prolong operations. When circumstances fail to progress, we must be willing to draw down or restructure the mission and look at other ways in which to bring about stability.

We have already begun to apply these principles to the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO). The Mission is working in a country in which it is increasingly clear that the Government is preying on its own people. Recent reporting revealed that the State was responsible for human rights violations, including the killing of 480 civilians. Yet we ask our peacekeepers to support the same Government. That is why the changes that we made to MONUSCO's mandate last week were so critical. Henceforth, we will focus on the protection of civilians and support for the democratic transition of power. We will develop an exit strategy, and we will demand real accountability from troop-contributing countries.

I recognize that much of the commentary about peacekeeping reform in the weeks to come will centre on budgets and troop levels, but I believe that experience shows that funding is no guarantee for success. I also recognize that there are those who say this initiative represents a withdrawal of the United States from the global stage. Nothing could be further from the truth. The United States will continue to lead both here at the United Nations and out in the real world. Part of leadership is knowing when something needs to be fixed and having the will to do something about it. I look forward to working with all Council members to do just that.

I resume my functions as President of the Council.

The meeting rose at 6.50 p.m.

United Nations S/PV.7919

Security Council

Seventy-second year

Provisional

7919th meeting

Friday, 7 April 2017, 11.30 a.m.
New York

President:	Mrs. Haley	(United States of America)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Llorentty Solíz
	China	Mr. Liu Jieyi
	Egypt	Mr. Aboulatta
	Ethiopia	Mr. Alemu
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Italy	Mr. Cardi
	Japan	Mr. Bessho
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Umarov
	Russian Federation	Mr. Safronkov
	Senegal	Mr. Seck
	Sweden	Mr. Skoog
	Ukraine	Mr. Yelchenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Rycroft
	Uruguay	Mr. Rosselli

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East

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The meeting was called to order at 11.35 a.m.

Expression of sympathy on the terrorist attack in Stockholm

The President: On behalf of the Council, I would first like to offer my condolences to the Government of Sweden and the victims of the senseless attack today in Stockholm. We have been reminded this week that the scourge of terrorism affects many countries, and we are united in our shared resolve.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Jeffrey Feltman, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I now give the floor to Mr. Feltman.

Mr. Feltman: Let me also convey, on behalf of those of us in the Secretariat, our condolences and our shock to our friends from Sweden on the attacks in Stockholm. The Secretary-General is following this with great concern.

The Council has requested the Secretariat to provide an update on Syria. In addition, the Special Envoy for Syria, Staffan de Mistura, will brief the Council in less than a week. I will therefore keep my remarks short.

In the last two months, we have seen the 30 December 2016 ceasefire falter amid a steady escalation of military activity. In mid-February, Government forces escalated their military operations in several areas of Damascus and Homs, recapturing Wadi Barada and Al-Waer in Homs. Military advances there were accompanied by the large-scale evacuation of fighters and their families. The Syrian Government cited the presence of the Al-Nusra Front in these areas, claims that were disputed by the opposition. Subsequently, during February and March, armed opposition groups, sometimes coordinating with the Al-Nusra Front, launched offensives in Dar'a, Damascus and Hamah.

On 4 April, as Government forces were fighting to regain territory recently lost to opposition offensives in northern Hamah, alarming reports emerged of an alleged chemical attack in nearby Khan Shaykhun, in southern Idlib. Sources on the ground reported airstrikes. The Council, of course, discussed this at an emergency meeting on 5 April (see S/PV.7915).

The Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) has announced that its Fact-Finding Mission in the Syrian Arab Republic is starting to investigate the alleged Khan Shaykhun attack. The Secretary-General, in a public statement, shared that he was appalled by the chemical-weapons attack in Khan Shaykhun and the deaths of and injury to many innocent civilians.

This morning at approximately 4.35 a.m., two United States naval vessels deployed in the eastern Mediterranean Sea launched a total of 59 cruise missiles targeting the Al-Shayrat military airbase in Homs governorate. The United States has stated that this was in response to what it says was the Syrian Government's use of chemical weapons from this airbase. The United States claimed that the missiles severely damaged or destroyed Syrian aircraft and support infrastructure and equipment. According to news reports, the United States said that it had informed Russian Federation forces of the strike in advance, using the established de-confliction mechanism, and taking precautions to minimize the risk to Russian or Syrian personnel located at the airfield.

A statement from the Syrian General Command of the army and the armed forces called the attack a "blatant act of aggression" that had caused six deaths and "huge material damage". Iran and the Russian Federation condemned the attack. The United Kingdom, Australia, Germany, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands and New Zealand have expressed some support for the strikes.

The Security Council has the primary responsibility for international peace and security. We hope that the Council can unite and exercise that responsibility to investigate the alleged use of chemical weapons in Khan Shaykhun. It is important that the Council send a strong collective message that any use of chemical weapons will not be tolerated and will have consequences. The Secretary-General stresses that the international community has a responsibility to hold any perpetrator of chemical-weapons attacks accountable and to ensure that chemical weapons are never again used as an instrument of warfare.

The protection of civilians and accountability should be at the top of our peace and security agenda. In the case of Syria, there can be no genuine protection if the parties to the conflict, Government and opposition alike, are permitted to act with impunity and if the Syrian Government continues to commit human rights violations against its own citizens. Protecting the Syrian people requires immediate action, action that is rooted in the principles of the United Nations and international law. Mindful of the risk of escalation, the Secretary-General has publicly appealed for restraint in order to avoid any acts that could deepen the suffering of the Syrian people. We further urge all parties involved in military operations to abide by international humanitarian law and take all necessary precautions to avoid and minimize civilian casualties.

As the Secretary-General has said, these events underscore our belief that the only way to resolve the conflict is through a political settlement. We urge the parties to renew their commitment to making progress in the Geneva talks as soon as possible. In that regard, resolution 2254 (2015) and the Geneva communiqué of 30 June 2012 (S/2012/522, annex) remain the foundation of United Nations mediation efforts and contain the core principles for them — and, ultimately, for a solution.

The President: I thank Mr. Feltman for his briefing.

I shall now give the floor to those Council members who wish to make statements.

Mr. Llorentty Solíz (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank you, Madam President, for giving me the floor and for organizing today's open meeting of the Council. It is essential to ensure that the entire world, not just the members of our Organization, can be witness to Council members' positions with complete transparency in the wake of the recent events in Syria.

The delegation of Bolivia asked that today's meeting be held because we are concerned about the events of the past 24 hours. While the Security Council was debating proposals about what the investigation mechanism should be for the horrendous chemical attacks witnessed by the whole world, while we were discussing how to word a draft resolution for the Council's consideration and while the permanent and non-permanent members were making suggestions about its text, the United States was once again preparing and carrying out a unilateral attack. Those missile attacks are indeed a unilateral action and represent a serious threat to international peace and security. That is because for the past 70 years humankind has been creating and building a structure that is not just physical or institutional but also legal. We have created international legal instruments precisely in order to avoid situations in which the most powerful can attack the weakest with impunity, to ensure a balance of power in the world and to avoid the most serious kinds of violations of international peace and security.

We believe it is the duty not only of the Security Council but of all the bodies of the United Nations to defend multilateralism. That is why we are here. We have agreed that the Charter of the United Nations must be respected, and the Charter forbids unilateral actions. Any action must be authorized by the Security Council in accordance with the Charter. I would like to refresh our memories a little by reading from Article 24, which states that

> "In order to ensure prompt and effective action by the United Nations, its Members confer on the Security Council primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, and agree that in carrying out its duties under this responsibility the Security Council acts on their behalf."

The Security Council is not just the 15 members who are seated here at this table. We represent the 193 States Members of this Organization, and through them we represent the people of the world. And we have agreed that unilateral actions violate international law. Yesterday, as we in the Security Council were discussing draft resolutions and striving to come up with alternatives and consensus, the United States not only launched a unilateral attack but — while we were discussing and demanding an independent, impartial, thorough and conclusive investigation of those previous attacks — the United States had taken it upon itself to be investigator, prosecutor, judge and jury. Where is the investigation that would enable us to establish objectively who was responsible for the attacks? This is an extremely serious violation of international law.

This is not the first time that this has happened. Throughout our history we can recall many episodes in which not just the United States but various Powers have acted unilaterally and violated the Charter. But the fact that it has now happened again does not mean that the United Nations and its members must accept it. In September 2013 the United States also launched attacks on Syria. I would like to recall what the then Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, said at the time, and I will read it in English, if I may.

(*spoke in English*)

> "[T]he Security Council has primary responsibility for international peace and security... That is my appeal, that everything should be handled within the framework of the United Nations Charter. The use of force is lawful only when in exercise of self-defence in accordance with Article 51 of the United Nations Charter, and/or when the Security Council approves such action."

(*spoke in Spanish*)

That was the position of the then Secretary-General, which helped to avert the taking of unilateral action in circumstances very similar to those we are experiencing today. This attack represents a threat to international peace and security because it threatens the political processes in Geneva and Astana. Mr. Feltman expressed it very well in the message from the Secretary-General when he said that it is essential to avoid any escalation of tensions that could damage the progress that has been made in Astana and Geneva.

As I said, this is not the first time this has happened, and I would like to recall here something that happened some years ago, on Wednesday, 5 February 2003, when the then Secretary of State of the United States of America came to this Chamber in order to present to us what he said in his own words was convincing proof that there were weapons of mass destruction in Iraq (see S/PV.4701). I believe that it is essential that we remember those images and the fact that in this very Chamber we were told that there were weapons of mass destruction in Iraq and that was the reason for the proposed invasion. That invasion resulted in 1 million deaths and set in motion a series of atrocities in the region. Would we be talking about the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham without that invasion? Would we be talking about the series of horrific attacks that have occurred in various parts of the world without that illegal invasion? I believe it is vital that we remember what history teaches us, and on that occasion the United States affirmed that it had all the proof necessary to show that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction. They were never, ever found.

I would like to repeat here what President Evo Morales Ayma said this morning.

> "I think and feel — I hope not to be wrong — that chemical weapons in Syria are an excuse for a military intervention. Unilateral actions are imperialistic actions. The United States is not interested in international law. It sets the United Nations aside when it suits it. Internal problems of States must be resolved through dialogue, not through bombing. This action threatens international security and world peace."

It is important that we talk about the double-standards — when we are in the United Nations meeting rooms, on the one hand, and when we are dealing with what can be considered real life, on the other hand. My own peoples — the peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean — have lived this reality throughout our history. They speak to us in the language of human rights, which we are supposed to live up to, but when their interests make the human rights discourse inconvenient for them, they systematically violate human rights.

The series of coups d'état in Latin America was organized and financed by the CIA. That is historical truth. It is not rhetoric. It is not a speech-making. It is the truth. Let us remember the coup d'état in 1973 against the constitutional Government of Salvador Allende, which was financed by the CIA. Let us remember the Escuela de las Americas at which soldiers were taught to torture people. There were training manuals for torture, which was taught to Latin American military personnel as part of the so-called national security doctrine.

When they are interested in human rights, the human rights are fine, but when human rights no longer comport with their interests, human rights no longer matter. The same goes for democracy. When it suits their interests, they are defenders of democracy, but when it does not they finance coups d'états. And unfortunately the same thing is happening with the United Nations and with the Security Council itself. When it is no longer in line with their interests, then multilateralism is not important. For the few things that suit them, multilateralism is fine. The United Nations is fine, but when it opposes their interests, then they are no longer interested in the United Nations, human rights or democracy.

When we unequivocally condemn chemical attacks, we are saying that the Security Council must not be used as an echo chamber for war propaganda or interventionism. The Security Council should not be used as a pawn that can be sacrificed on a chess board, the chess board of war. The Security Council is ultimately the last hope we have to guarantee international peace and security, based on principles, norms and the international rule of law.

I would also like to point out that, just as you have convened this meeting in a very transparent manner, Madam President, it is absolutely vital that we show concern about the unfortunate fact that there are first-class and second-class members of the Security Council — the permanent members that not only have the right to veto but also control the procedures that govern decision-making, and the other 10, which are members only temporarily, that are brought in or consulted only occasionally, not to carry any weight but simply to support the positions of the permanent five. This is not multilateralism.

Bolivia would like to reiterate its strong condemnation of the use of chemical weapons or the use of chemical-weapons precursors as an unjustifiable and criminal act regardless of its motivation, wherever it may be, whenever it may be and by whomsoever it may be committed. We reiterate that when these cases arise we demand independent, impartial, complete and conclusive investigations.

Unfortunately, yesterday's attacks have dealt a mortal blow to the Joint Investigative Mechanism and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and their ability to carry out an investigation and find out exactly what happened a few days ago in Syria. We reiterate that those responsible for acts must be duly prosecuted and punished to the fullest extent of the law. The same is true of any actions that violate international law and that endanger international security.

Mr. Rycroft (United Kingdom): I deeply regret that the previous speaker showed more outrage against the United States than against the Al-Assad regime, which on Tuesday deliberately dropped chemical weapons killing over 100 men, women and children in the most barbaric fashion.

More than three and a half years ago, the Syrian regime made a pledge: it would join the 189 countries that had already signed the Chemical Weapons Convention and it would reveal the full extent of its chemical arsenal and proceed with its full destruction. What spurred this pledge was a chemical-weapon attack [illegible] that time in Ghouta. Hundreds, if not thousands, were dead. There were images of men, women and children choking, foaming at the mouth, clearly asphyxiated.

Three and a half years after a historically heinous war crime was committed, after the stockpiles were supposed to be destroyed, Al-Assad on Tuesday showed us yet again, this time in Idlib, that he is capable of redefining horror. Tuesday's attack must be fully investigated. Impunity cannot be the norm. We will continue to work with our partners on the Security Council to ensure that those responsible are brought to justice.

The United Kingdom supports the United States air strike on the Al-Shayrat air field because war crimes have consequences, and the greatest war criminal of all, Bashar Al-Assad, has now been put on notice. The United States strike was a proportionate response to unspeakable acts that gave rise to overwhelming humanitarian distress. It was also a strong effort to save lives by ensuring that such acts never happen again.

The resolution that we adopted three and a half years ago (resolution 2118 (2013)) provided a framework for the destruction of chemical weapons in Syria. It had a clear author and a clear guarantor. At the time, Russia assured us that Al-Assad would fully declare his chemical arsenal and would continue to cooperate with international inspectors. Perhaps that was the assurance that Russia received from Al-Assad, and perhaps Russia has now learned the hard lesson that backing a war criminal comes with its own consequence: humiliation.

Russia has barely any support from the Arab world for its policy of propping up the criminal Al-Assad regime as it carries out chemical-weapon attacks against its own people. Russia needs to listen to the Security Council, listen to the Arab world, listen to the rest of the international community, and above all listen to the Syrian people. Their message is clear: end Al-Assad's bombs, his use of chemical weapons, his torture dungeons.

Instead, Russia has given Al-Assad everything he could dream of. Without Russia's seven vetoes in the Security Council defying the views of other members of the Council, Al-Assad would now have faced sanctions and justice. And what did Russia get for its unconditional support? Al-Assad ignores Russia's requests for him to obey a ceasefire. Al-Assad defies Russia's request for him not to gas his own people. Al-Assad thumbs his nose at Russia's calls for him to join a peace process. Russia sits in this Chamber today humiliated by its failure to bring to heel a puppet dictator entirely propped up by Russia itself and Hizbullah and Iran.

Let me bust some myths about our private negotiations over the past couple of days. We were seeking agreement on a draft resolution. I repeatedly asked the delegation of the Russian Federation why it could not support our draft resolution. If it wanted the truth, why did it not want the United Nations and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons to have access to the places, the people and the information that they needed? What possible excuse does the Russian Federation have for keeping that information from the investigators? What reason does it have to continue to protect Al-Assad? If it cared about the Charter of the United Nations, why would it protect a dictator who has repeatedly violated international law? I received no answer.

There is another way for Russia. I appeal to the Russian Federation to abandon its failed strategy; join the rest of the Council in its call for justice and accountability; end its protection of a war criminal; and join all of us in supporting a genuine political process that would lead to a transition to a more legitimate and representative Government.

The only reason that we are here and these discussions are taking place at this moment in the Chamber is because the international community has not done enough. Things can be different. The difference that can and must be made lies in a political solution. That will not happen if we take the familiar route that has plagued the Council, the countries of the region and the millions of Syrians looking for a future. The new road must see the Syrian regime engage. The new road must have Russia and Iran not only at the table but negotiating in good faith.

We are here within the walls of an Organization that was built to guide us when peace seems out of reach. The United Nations has a vital role in convening those negotiations and helping the parties resolve their disputes. The agenda has been set, and it is long overdue that a proper negotiation happens on a future Syrian-led transition that meets the legitimate aspirations of the Syrian people. Al-Assad must engage in serious discussion about that future to meet the aspirations of all Syrians.

In conclusion, the United Kingdom supports the United States action as an appropriate response to a heinous act by a brutal and uncaring dictator who believes that gassing his people is somehow a legitimate step on the road to stability. It is now time to get a genuine political process back up and running. Those discussions may be long and difficult, but the people of Syria deserve nothing less. If we want to ensure that the shocking images that have haunted us this week are truly confined to history, then that is our duty.

Mr. Aboulatta (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): We have been following with great concern events following the Khan Shaykhun incident, which claimed the lives of dozens of innocent Syrian civilians. Numerous reports have confirmed that the incident was once again the result of the use of chemical weapons in Syria. We have also been following the dangerous developments concerning the Syrian situation on the ground since last night.

The Khan Shaykhun incident and other incidents and crimes in Syria of the past seven years are a clear indication of a lack of conscience. They are living proof that the people of the region — specially the Syrian people — are the main victims of a proxy war that has paralysed the international community. Serious dialogue has been absent because of the decision of many parties to fall back on their narrow interests, as if the deaths of hundreds of thousands of civilians and the displacement of millions of Syrians were only a matter of collateral damage to be deferred to a later date following a political deal that the puppeteers of this war might reach in line with their interests.

I honestly believe that, within the Security Council, the disagreements and the rivalries that sometimes concern issues unrelated to Syria have led to the daily increase in the number of innocent civilians killed. We are exasperated by statements of regret and condemnation by the international community following every human tragedy that befalls the Syrian people. We are fed up with such statements because they have become empty expressions and mere words that are unaccompanied by any genuine and serious international effort that would meet the interests of the Syrian people and have a genuine impact on their daily lives. I therefore urgently call on all members to dispense with their disagreements and divergent views, and focus on a way out of the Syrian maze.

All parties at the international, regional and Syrian levels should support an immediate ceasefire and seriously and objectively move forward without any preconditions or procedural manipulation within the framework of the International Syrian Support Group (ISSG) under the auspices of the United Nations in Geneva.

We believe that the Syrian people are capable of determining their own future. However, achieving their aspirations for democracy, reconstruction and stability is impossible without genuine international support for containing the negative impact of the spoilers and helping Syrians combat terrorism in Syria and build their own State on a firm and stable foundation.

Perhaps the time has come to be frank. I call on the United States and the Russian Federation in particular, owing to their capacities, role as co-Chairs of the ISSG and their influence on the various local and regional parties, to move resolutely in that direction in line with the relevant Security Council resolutions to reach middle ground and a political settlement in Syria. I urge them to resume their coordination and cooperation on the ground and in the political realm so as to salvage what can be salvaged and avoid any further deterioration of the situation.

In conclusion, I stress that a Syrian settlement will be possible only if it is based on clear and sincere intentions. Egypt will welcome every honest and serious action to save Syria from the abyss and contain the present and future repercussions of the crisis in the region.

Mr. Rosselli (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Under-Secretary-General Jeffrey Feltman for his briefing and for relaying the message from the Secretary-General.

In the midst of horrendous attacks, several decades ago the British people coined an expression that is truly appropriate for today: "Keep calm and carry on". We believe that today more than ever our first priority should be to keep calm and continue in our work. For despite its complicated and long-running, the Syrian conflict must remain within the multilateral.And that is precisely why the Security Council has a primary responsibility. We must resolutely reinvigorate and strengthen the political nature of the three primary forums in which the issue has been discussed — the Security Council, the Geneva negotiations and the Astana talks — so as to strengthen the ceasefire and contain the use of violence.

The fundamental principles that guide the conduct of Uruguay at the international level are deeply rooted in its character as a small country without an army posing a threat to absolutely anyone else. The non-use of force in international relations is therefore a cardinal principle Uruguay's foreign policy. We accept the use of force only in accordance with the principles of international law and the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations. Uruguay deems any other use of force illegitimate.

Uruguay, throughout its history, has consistently rejected the unilateral use of force, including in such cases as the 1950s Korean invasion and the invasion of Hungary, as well as the use of force against Cuba, Czechoslovakia, Afghanistan and Iran. We have always rejected the unilateral use of force. Uruguay hopes that this individual incident, which occurred against the backdrop of the inability of the main Powers to resolve the conflict in Syria, does not lead to additional attacks and that the parties will refrain from further actions that will only aggravate the situation and lead to an endless spiral of violence that could also spread, directly or indirectly, to other neighbouring countries.

Uruguay believes that the principles of international law must be considered as a whole and that therefore another key principle here is absolute respect for international humanitarian law and international human rights law. In the past six years, we have seen the worst atrocities committed against the civilian population. The investigations carried out by the Joint Investigative Mechanism have revealed the use of chemical weapons by both the Syrian Government and the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham/Da'esh terrorist group. The most recent example was Tuesday's horrendous chemical-weapon attack, a war crime that should receive the strongest possible condemnation on the part of the international community, as the use of chemical weapons poses a threat to international peace and security.

However, in the midst of all of this we must not overlook the Council's duty to identify those responsible for the chemical-weapon attack in Khan Shaykhun. Up until a few hours ago, the Council was intensively negotiating to adopt a draft resolution that would facilitate the conduct of an investigation aimed at determining who was responsible. Now more than ever before, the Council must shoulder its responsibilities so as to clarify that incident and demand accountability for the abhorrent crimes committed.

We must also reflect on the situation in which the Council finds itself owing to the existence of the privilege of the veto in the adoption of its resolutions, and the aggravating factor of the use or threat of the use of the veto with respect to resolutions relating to crimes against humanity.

Uruguay, as a signatory to the Accountability, Coherence and Transparency Group code of conduct, calls once again on the members of the Council to commit to not use the veto in situations of this kind. The use of the veto strips the Council of its functionality and effectiveness and further imbalances its work. We reiterate the importance of resuming all multilateral negotiations under way so as to bring about a solution to the conflict that is afflicting the Syrian people.

Mr. Cardi (Italy): At the outset, let me express our solidarity with the Government of Sweden and our condolences in connection with the victims of the attack this morning in Stockholm.

It bears repeating that the attack conducted on Khan Shaykhun on 4 April was ruthless and cruel, with a high death toll that included many children. It is a vile action that Italy and the European Union have firmly condemned and that add to Al-Assad's repeated violations of the ceasefire and the acts of violence repeatedly perpetrated by his armed forces against civilians.

The Government of Italy is closely following the events that are unfolding in the Mediterranean in consideration of its many and direct interests in the stability of the region, where we are also playing a role as the security provider for the international community.

As Foreign Minister Alfano stated this morning, Italy understands the reasons for the United States' military action, which was proportionate in time and manner and a response to a prolonged sense of impunity that is completely unacceptable. It is also a deterrent to the risk of any further use of chemical weapons in Syria, in addition to the cases already ascertained by the United Nations, for which there already should have been a prompt and meaningful response, including in terms of accountability, which the Council must continue to seek.

It is now, we believe, necessary and urgent to bring together all the main actors involved in the Syrian crisis so that they can work together to finally achieve a political solution that will free the Syrian people from of the tragedy that they been suffering for the past six years.

We must take a forward-looking approach. Italy calls on the international community to continue and redouble its efforts to achieve a United Nations-led political transition in Syria, in compliance with resolution 2254 (2015) and the 2012 Geneva communiqué (S/2012/522, annex). This remains the only way out of the crisis and the only way to avoid further violence and further tragedies in the country.

We believe that all parties must now leverage all their influence so as to facilitate a real ceasefire, ensure full access to humanitarian aid and promote a process aimed at progressively building trust between the Syrian parties.

All of the different tracks of the Syrian issue — the non-proliferation of chemical weapons, cessation of hostilities, the fight against terrorism, humanitarian access and political talks — can advance only if the Security Council is united. As an elected member of the Council, Italy will continue to work towards this strategic goal.

Mr. Delattre (France) (*spoke in French*): My statement is an extension of the joint communiqué issued last night by the President of the French Republic, Mr. François Hollande, and the Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany, Ms. Angela Merkel.

I, too, would like to begin by expressing once again to Sweden our most sincere condolences and full solidarity with it following the tragic terrorist attack in Stockholm this morning.

The Security Council is meeting once again following the use of chemical weapons by the regime of Bashar Al-Assad. Almost four years after the large-scale massacre in Ghouta, in August 2013, the 4 April attack has revealed the truth: Al-Assad has never renounced the use of chemical weapons or deviated from his ultimate goal: the annihilation, pure and simple, of all those who resist him, whatever the price may be.

France has consistently called for strong action on the part of the international community in the face of the serious and repeated violations of international humanitarian law by the Damascus regime, which constitute war crimes and crimes against humanity, as was already underscored by the Secretary-General in 2013 following the chemical attack of 21 August 2013. My country has spared no effort to ensure that these crimes do not go unpunished. That includes proposing that the Security Council refer the matter to the International Criminal Court. Those initiatives, however, have been met with obstacles and vetoes, notably Russia's. The Syrian regime has violated its international obligations to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on their Destruction. The actions of Syria also constitute a clear violation of the resolutions of the Security Council.

In that context, the American airstrike constitutes a legitimate response to the chemical attack. The airstrike is also an important reminder that the future use of such weapons will not be tolerated. To those who pretend to be astonished, Bashar Al-Assad bears full responsibility for the situation. For years, the regime has openly flouted the basic principles of our system of collective security. It has repeatedly and systematically violated its obligations under international humanitarian law, the norm on the prohibition of the use of chemical weapons, particularly against civilians, as well as Security Council resolutions. It has become imperative to respond and deter the regime from such actions.

Recourse by anyone to chemical weapons constitutes a war crime and a crime against humanity, which cannot go unpunished. Syria cannot be an exception. That was already the position of France in the aftermath of the chemical attack on Ghouta, and we have never deviated from it. The international community can no longer be duped by the dilatory tactics of the Al-Assad regime.

In adopting resolution 2118 (2013), the Security Council made a very clear commitment to sanction any failure by Syria to fulfil its obligations. That has not prevented Bashar Al-Assad's regime from continuing its repeated, methodical and barbaric use of weapons of mass destruction since 2013, openly flouting the authority of the Council and its international commitments. Those violations have been irrefutably documented by a mechanism created by the Security Council, the Joint Investigative Mechanism.

On 28 February, action by the Security Council was once again prevented by Russia's unwarranted and abusive use of the veto (see S/PV.7893). That blockage was perceived by the Al-Assad regime as a signal of impunity. In parallel, Russia has not met its responsibilities or exerted the necessary pressure on the regime in Damascus. It is the responsibility of all of the members of the Council to ensure that light be shed on the circumstances of the attack carried out by the Syrian regime in Khan Shaykhun and that its perpetrators are held accountable for their actions before a court of law.

France reiterates its full support for the mechanisms of the United Nations and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons to carry out a diligent inquiry into the matter. France will not compromise regarding the disintegration of the chemical non-proliferation regime. France will continue to work with its partners to strengthen it in all relevant forums.

The attack of 4 April definitively demonstrated to the world the urgent need for a political solution in Syria. The maintenance in power of a dictator who carries out chemical attacks against civilians is not only a moral abomination. It is an unsustainable threat to the region and to the world.

All members of the Council agree on one point: the Syrian crisis will never be settled by military means alone. Today, because of the tragedy of Khan Shaykhun, we have the moral and political responsibility to reinvigorate the talks that have begun in Geneva to find a political settlement in Syria under the auspices of the United Nations. That is the top priotity. In that context, France calls on the international community to coalesce around a political transition in Syria, in accordance with resolution 2254 (2015) and the Geneva communiqué of 30 June 2012 (S/2012/522, annex). France and its European partners will soon be circulating proposals in that regard.

Our responsibility is to history. Every member of the Security Council, particularly Russia, must live up to their responsibilities. We must commit ourselves to seeking an urgent political solution. It is an urgent matter because we are talking about the security of the Syrian people and the region. The fight against terrorism is at stake. Let us not forget that Al-Assad's regime is the biggest generator of terrorism.

Mr. Liu Jieyi (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): The Syrian conflict has been going on for seven years, which has led to large numbers of casualties among innocent civilians. China would like to empathize with the profound suffering of the Syrian people. The present situation must not last any longer. Swift action must be taken. We must resort to dialogue and consultations in order to assure an appropriate solution. We must help the Syrian people lift themselves out of suffering at an early date, help Syria rebuild itself and ensure that Syrians can lead peaceful and stable lives.

China has always advocated for dialogue and consultations as the best means to resolve international conflicts. All parties need to make efforts to prevent the situation in Syria from further deteriorating. A political solution is the only way out of the situation. A military solution will not work. It would only exacerbate the suffering of the Syrian people, further complicating the situation in the region and making it more turbulent, which is not in the common interests of Syria, countries of the region or the international community.

China calls upon all relevant parties to firmly persist in diplomatic efforts, insist on a political solution to the situation in Syria through dialogue and consultations and support the role of the United Nations, including the efforts of Special Envoy De Mistura, as the main channel of mediation and achieving progress in the Geneva talks. We should therefore safeguard all efforts to maintain the hard-won momentum for a political solution to the Syrian question.

Recent days have brought about complications in certain areas of Syria. The international community must remain highly alert regarding such relevant developments. We must stick to uniform criteria in fighting against all terrorist organizations listed by the Security Council.

Mr. Bessho (Japan): I join others in expressing my sincere condolences to the families of the victims of today's attack in Stockholm. We stand in solidarity with the people of Sweden.

Turning to Syria, the use of chemical weapons is not permissible under any circumstances. Three days ago, we faced another shocking report that many innocent civilians had become victims of chemical weapons in Syria. The act is extremely inhumane and violates the relevant Security Council resolutions. The Government of Japan supports the determination of the United States Government to never allow the spread or use of chemical weapons. We understand that the United States took the action last night in order to prevent further aggravation of the situation.

The Council must reaffirm its determination to address the reported use of chemical weapons in Idlib. Once again, Japan urges the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) Fact-finding Mission to expeditiously conduct an investigation and report its conclusion as soon as possible, so that the OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism can conduct its own investigation in order to identify those who are responsible.

In conclusion, Japan reiterates its position that there is no military solution for Syria. We must advance the political process based on resolution 2254 (2015).

Mr. Safronkov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): First of all, we convey our deep condolences to the Permanent Representative of Sweden to the United Nations following the tragedy that took place in Stockholm.

On the night of 7 April, the United States carried out an attack on the territory of sovereign Syria. We describe that attack as a flagrant violation of international law and an act of aggression. We strongly condemn the illegitimate actions by the United States, whose consequences for regional and international stability could be extremely serious. The attack was a flagrant violation of the 2015 memorandum on preventing air incidents and ensuring security during operations in Syrian airspace. The Russian Ministry of Defence has stopped its cooperation with the Pentagon under that memorandum.

In recent times, the United States Administration has often talked about the need to combat international terrorism, and that provided the justification for American troops and their allies being present on Syrian soil, although they were there without the invitation of the legitimate Government of Syria and without the approval of the Security Council. Manipulating Articles of the Charter of the United Nations is beyond any criticism. The aggression by the United States has merely served to strengthen terrorism. The attack was directed at Syrian armed forces infrastructure and its air force. In other words, it was directed at those, who over all these years, have been involved in the fight against terrorism. It is not difficult to imagine how much terrorists' spirits were raised after the attack by Washington.

Immediately following the attack, major attacks were perpetrated by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant and the Al-Nusra Front against Syrian military sites. Once again, we repeat that the Syrian armed forces will continue to be the main anti-terrorist entity of the Syrian Arab Republic. Who will combat terrorism? Will it be the illegal armed groups that have entered Syria by the hundreds of thousands? Iraqi and Libyan military bases have been destroyed, and look at what then happened. Such actions are contrary to international decisions, including the Geneva communiqué (S/2012/522, annex), which we all played a part in designing. The communiqué includes references to settlement, while ensuring that national institutions remain intact. Are those actions the way to ensure sustainability?

The Russian Federation, from the tribune of the United Nations, has stated the need to establish an international coalition to combat terrorism, which would be based on international law. On many occasions, we have sent signals to Washington about our readiness to undertake such cooperation. As we see it, Washington has chosen a different path. We must recall that unilateral actions lead to reprehensible and tragic consequences for region and its inhabitants. Think about the consequences and remember the outcome of United States actions in the Middle East. Think about the steps it has taken and their impact on the process to bring about a political settlement in Syria. Unfortunately, today's appeal to move forward the political process after the military attack shows its hypocrisy. With regard to the Astana and Geneva tracks, clear progress has been made in recent days. What goals guided the United States when it undermined that progress, especially given that the progress achieved was no thanks to the United States at all.

Returning to the use of chemical weapons as a pretext yet again, the United States, the United Kingdom and France put forward a draft resolution (S/2017/172) that was quite erroneous in its very logic. The logic behind predetermining that Damascus was guilty was deeply flawed. What about the gold standard of the presumption of innocence? Why do they apply it in their own capitals but forget about it when it pertains to the Middle East and or to other regions? Why do the capitals of those countries forget that principle when it pertains to the Middle East and or to other regions? Why do they forget the presumption if innocence in such cases? All of that is taking place because Washington, London and Paris — I have spoken about this topic in closed consultations and would like to reiterate it — are paranoid about overthrowing the legitimate Government in sovereign Syria. That was clearly shown by non-diplomatic actions and the statements made by the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom, Mr. Rycroft. Stop putting forward such unprofessional arguments and levelling accusations against my country; they fly in the face of diplomacy. They are all lies. Once again, I warn them not teven try to sow the seeds of discord between us and the Arab world. Nothing will work or be achieved. That is why they are becoming annoyed. All Arab countries recall the colonial hypocrisy.

In his statement, Ambassador Rycroft tried to divert the attention from the core issue. Once again it did not work. That is why I would like to recall exact events. Those who put forward this initiative are in no way interested in an impartial investigation by a competent international body to determine exactly what took place in Khan Shaykhun. In addition, I would also state that they fear such an investigation. They are afraid of a genuinely independent investigation. What would happen if the outcome of that investigation were to contradict their anti-Government paradigm? They feared investigations into the events in Khan al-Asal, then in eastern Ghouta and now in Khan Shaykhun.

With regard to Khan Shaykhun, the Permanent Representative of the United States stated that there is credible evidence from the United States intelligence services who claimed that Syrian Government forces used chemical weapons. We said, "Show us, and experts will determine whether or not that was the case". I would recall that General Powell talked in this very Chamber about chemical weapons and weapons of mass destruction, which were not found (see S/PV.4701).

Let us work together as professionals, and not issue ultimatums. We are living in a very complex and multipolar world, and we cannot live like this. Russia has proposed a constructive alternative to its partners in the Security Council. They just didn't have a trump card or a winning alternative. They have not put forward any professional alternative or good arguments to us. Our initiative was specifically based on the appeal for specialists, chosen on a geographical basis by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) Fact-finding Mission and the United Nations-OPCW Joint Investigative Mechanism on chemical weapons in Syria to visit the site where this incident took place in Khan Shaykhoun, as well as neighbouring areas, as soon as possible, in order to carry out a professional investigation.

All Syrian parties were asked to grant these expets immediate access to where the events took place. It is not irrelevant to recall that the Syrian Government does not control that area of Idlib province. Supported from aborad, military groups that are closely linked to Al-Nusra Front terrrorist units rule over those territories, and they have things to hide, including in the context of chemical weapons. But some are trying to back them again, as they backed notorious bandits in eastern Aleppo. However, everything became clear once Aleppo was freed. It is no coincidence that the many complaints of the Syrian Government related to the massive entry of chemical weapons into the country, their warehousing by extremists in special warehouses and their use against the army and civilians have simply been ignored — or it has been considered for month after month with comtempt and without any outcome.

The OPCW Fact-finding Mission does not work in a conscientious manner. It prefers to be guided in its work by statements from opposition groups, Internet blogs, social networks and a whole range of non-governmental organizations of highly dubious reputation. They do not even look at information and evidence from areas where the incidents took place. And they want us to agree with that information? It is not even worth looking at.

In our draft resolution we also set out the need to establish a geographical balance with regard to staffing the investigation group. That is an important point, which has a direct bearing on the issue of impartiality and trust. Thus far, the Fact-finding Mission was usurped by representatives from a single country that is in the forefront of anti-Damascus parties.

Proof of blatant double standards includes ignoring the chemical attacks carried out by terrorists in the Middle East as a whole. In that regard, members could recall the recent events in Mosul, Iraq. Where was the international community's reaction? Where was their warning — first and foremost, of those who carried out this headline-grabbing public action in regard to Khan Shaykhoun? Are these victims of a different category? Are they perhaps second-rate victims? Why do we not see in their countries' headlines the tragedy in the besieged town of Mosul? We are talking about hundreds of thousands of people.

Thus is the attack in Syria an attempt to distract attention from the many victims among the peaceful populations in Iraq and Syria caused by unilateral actions, including attacks on homes and other civilian targets. There are no properly working Hhumanitarian corridors. Let us recall the little girl from Mosul named Hawra. No one said anything at all about this little girl, who became a symbol of this tragedy: everyone in her house was killed when a coalition bomb fell on her house. Thank God, the little girl lived. Sne had to fight for her life, but is now out of danger. However, she is almost blind. We will not set up a cynical show and hold up photographs here in the Chamber. But people must know about the Mosul tragedy.

Do not tell me that we are trying to draw attention away from Syria when we talk about Mosul. That is a lie. Those who know our position on this will know that this is a shameless lie. We do not want to draw anyone's attention from anything, in particular from what terrorists are doing. We merely want to say that if we are fighting terrorism, we should do it on the basis of single standards and not by dividing parties into good and bad, allies and foes. Let me say once again that no one should try to set us at odds with Iraq. No one will be able to ruin our relations that country. They should look at our relations with Iraq, as opposed to their own.

The 10 non-permanent members of the Security Council did try to find compromise last evening during the consultations we called for. They thanked the American delegation for the fact that voting had been postponed. However, there really was nothing to thank them for. Our colleagues did not even imagine that the decision was made with totally different ideas in mind. It certainly was not with the idea of continuing constructive and conciliatory dialogue. Washington had already chosen to take military action, which took place with members barely having left the United Nations building. We call upon the United States immediately to cease its aggression and to join the efforts being made towards a political settlement in Syria, as well as to work together to combat the terrorist threat. We are still prepared to engage in such cooperation.

We have heard many insulting words today with regard to our right to the veto — our right. We have won it and have exercised it in a responsible manner, but we use it only in such circumstances when others in the Security Council try to impose their irresponsible geopolitical projects. The Council must develop agreed international decisions. Reckless geopolitical schemes will never be supported.

Mr. Seck (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): First and foremost, I would like to express, through our colleague Ambassador Skoog, the sincere condolences and sympathy of the Senegalese delegation to the people and the Government of Sweden in connection with the tragic attack this morning.

We welcome the holding of this morning's emergency meeting, under the same format in which we gathered on 5 April (see S/PV.7915). But like on that day, with regard to late yesterday afternoon, we are today seeing a deep divide in the Security Council when it comes to the Syrian crisis — which, with the use of chemical weapons, the proliferation of terrorist groups and with the unprecedented catastrophic repercussions — is one that constitutes the most serious of our day. What image are we sending out to the international community? Above all, what message are we sending out to the Syrian people, who are lacerated and disoriented? That we have lost our direction? What other ambiguous message are we sending out to the terrorists who are proliferating in Syria.

Nothing can justify an atrocity such as the use of chemical weapons against civilians, even during a conflict. As a party to the Chemical Weapons Convention, Senegal reiterates its firm condemnation of the use of all kinds of weapons of mass destruction, including chemical weapons. My delegation would like to further encourage the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons in its work, particularly in connection with its Fact-finding Mission in the Syrian Arab Republic, and commends its effort to bring together and analyse all the information from every available source in order to determine who is responsible for what.

Last September, in this very Chamber, the President of the Republic of Senegal, Mr. Macky Sall, stated that there could be no military solution to this crisis (see S/PV.7774). That is why my delegation reaffirms its strong conviction that only a negotiated solution, on the basis of the Geneva communiqué (S/2012/522, annex) and resolution 2254 (2015), will make it possible to find a final outcome to this conflict. We must not forget that this agreement needs to cover the four following aspects: political, security, humanitarian and non-proliferation.

In that regard, my delegation wishes every success to the fifth round of the Geneva talks, which opened on 23 March, with the hope that, with the praiseworthy efforts of the United Nations Special Envoy for Syria, Mr. De Mistura, who is going to brief us here next week, these talks will lead to substantial conclusions. The fourth meeting had made it possible for the first time to address substantial issues, such as constitutional reform, the political transition and the holding of elections under the observation of the United Nations.

Mr. Umarov (Kazakhstan): I join others in expressing our heartfelt condolences to our Swedish colleagues on the terrorist act in Stockholm.

My delegation is greatly concerned by recent developments and the absence of unity among Security Council members over the chemical attack in Syria. We would like to make the following observations and recommendations on the critical political aspects pertaining to the situation in Syria.

We call on all parties concerned to refrain from actions that could increase the risks of a military escalation of tensions in Syria. We would like to emphasize that the lack of unanimity may destroy the new hopes of the Syrian people that arose following the adoption of the historical resolution 2336 (2015). We should not undermine an inclusive political negotiating process, as provided for in resolution 2254 (2015). The fifth round of intra-Syrian talks, held in Geneva from 23 to 31 March, were able this time to move from discussing formal and procedural issues to the substantive and political aspects of future peace talks. In that regard, we simply cannot allow a ceasefire to dissolve, as it is our last chance to realize the long-awaited peace on Syrian territory.

We consider the gas attacks in Syria to be a crime against humanity, and we strongly condemn the use of chemical weapons. It is important to conduct a thorough, objective and impartial investigation into all aspects of the chemical attack on Khan Shaykhun on 4 April, which will make it possible for the international community to render a fair verdict against the perpetrators, in full compliance with international law.

We would like to remind members of the Council that the principled position of Kazakhstan is not only the most severe condemnation of the use of weapons of mass destruction by any party, especially against the civilian population, but also the resolution of conflicts exclusively by peaceful means. We also have to respect the sovereignty of States that are States Members of the United Nations and the purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. More important, we urgently need a political solution. Only a political diplomatic solution can bring about peace in Syria, and we call upon the international community to exert political will to overcome their differences and negotiate peace and Syria.

The legitimate authorities of the Syrian Arab Republic and other parties must thoroughly execute their obligations of complying with the relevant recommendations made by Organization by the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and the United Nations by accepting the personnel designated by them, while providing for and ensuring the security of activities undertaken by the personnel. In that regard, they must provide staff with immediate and unfettered access to, and the right to inspect, any and all sites in carrying out their functions, and allow immediate and unfettered access to individuals whom the OPCW has grounds to believe to be of importance for the purpose of its mandate.

The crisis in Syria, which is still unfolding, is having an impact not only on the region, but on the whole international community. Kazakhstan therefore believes that a regional approach involving neighbouring countries with influence on the parties in the Syrian conflict should be considered as a very effective method in mitigating the situation and preventing deterioration. There is a strong need to continue supporting the aims of the Astana talks and further Geneva negotiations in order to see positive outcomes. We welcome the significant results of the successful ministerial-level conference held in Brussels in April, chaired by the European Union and the United Nations and attended by many international governmental organizations and non-governmental organizations. The pledges made are encouraging and send a message of solidarity to the people of Syria and all those impacted by the conflict. The pledges made at the meeting will increase the amount of the much-needed essential humanitarian assistance provided to the Syrian people, which is most important element to achieve our political objectives.

Finally, I will conclude by quoting Secretary-General Guterres who, at the opening plenary meeting of the Brussels conference on the theme "Supporting the future of Syria and the region", said, "the most difficult times call for the greatest efforts". And, I would add, and also the greatest of compromises.

Mr. Skoog (Sweden): At the outset, I would like to say that I am really heartened by all the expressions of condolences and sympathies that are coming in as we speak on my telephone from all our friends in the Chamber this morning. I thank everyone for that.

I also thank you, Madam President, for convening this very important meeting. As we stated two days ago in this Chamber (see S/PV.7893), the alleged use of chemical weapons in the attack in Khan Shaykhun was abhorrent and unacceptable. If these allegations are proven to be correct, it will, unfortunately, be no surprise. The Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM) in Syria has concluded that chemical weapons have been used by the Syrian regime on at least three occasions. This latest attack only adds to the many other confirmed cases of international crimes committed in the Syrian conflict by all parties, most notably the Syrian regime.

The use of chemical weapons is clearly illegal, constitutes a threat to international peace and security and can amount to war crimes or crimes against humanity. There must be no impunity for such atrocities. Sweden has been extremely clear on the following points: the attack in Khan Shaykun must be condemned in the strongest terms; there needs to be a rapid, full and impartial investigation to confirm the use of chemical weapons; and those responsible for this horrendous attack must be held to account.

That is why we have worked tirelessly over the past few days to ensure that the Council adopts a strong draft resolution on a robust and immediate investigation into this outrage. While those efforts did not bear fruit yesterday, we still hope there is enough common ground for the Council to move forward on a strong draft resolution. Efforts should continue, and we will remain constructively and actively engaged.

With regard to the air strike by the United States of America last night, in response to the 4 April attack, it is important that action is based on international law. Last night's missile attack also raises questions as to its compatibility with international law. As the Secretary-General said, restraint is important to avoid any risk of escalation now.

Sweden has championed accountability for war crimes and crimes against humanity in Syria.

We voted in favour of the draft resolution (S/2017/172) on accountability for the use of chemical weapons on 28 February. We endorsed European Union-targeted measures against those implicated in the use of chemical weapons. We support the JIM, including through financial support and technical expertise. We have also actively supported the

Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, chaired by Mr. Pinheiro. We co-sponsored General Assembly resolution 71/248, which established the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism to Assist in the Investigation and Prosecution of Persons Responsible for the Most Serious Crimes under International Law Committed in the Syrian Arab Republic since March 2011, which, we hope, will begin its work very soon, and provided support through an initial contribution of approximately $400,000 to the Mechanism.

Instead of exchanging accusations and insults around this table, we now need to come together to urgently reinvigorate the United Nations-led political process. Ultimately, the only way of ending the suffering in Syria is by achieving a sustainable political solution. That will require a transitional political process based on resolution 2254 (2015). We reiterate our full support for the intra-Syrian talks under the auspices of the United Nations in Geneva and the efforts of Special Envoy Staffan de Mistura, from whom we look forward to hearing next week. The parties must engage seriously.

Over the past few days, we have expressed our outrage over the latest atrocity in Khan Shaykhun. Yet every day the Syrian people continue to suffer the brutality of war in all its forms. It is high time to end the war in Syria and allow the Syrian people to determine their own future.

Mr. Alemu (Ethiopia): I thank you, Madam President, for convening this meeting.

Let me express our condolences to the Government of Sweden and our Swedish colleagues. We condemn the terrorist attack.

I would like to raise several points. First, if the situation in Syria continues, it will result in the collapse of the Syrian State. We have no doubt that the winners will be the terrorists. We have seen it too many times before. That perhaps is another indication that the international community enjoys no united stand on giving priority to resolving the Syrian crisis through political dialogue and countering the scourge of terrorism in a unified and concerted manner. Nevertheless, there is no justification for the crime committed on 4 April.

Secondly, a very urgent issue that requires clarification and a wise approach involves the fact that too many States and non-State actors are very active in Syria. Who is unaware that Syria has been an open field for quite some time? The point is that the situation has worsened and nobody knows what tomorrow will bring. We are therefore facing a much broader and more complicated matter that is likely to get out of hand. In our mind, the priority should be to find a way out before we get to that slippery slope. Now is the time for wisdom to prevail and statesmanship to take the upper hand. One doubts that that has been the case for some time. In that regard, the Secretary-General said today, among other things,

> "The Security Council has the primary responsibility for international peace and security. I call on the Council to unite and exercise that responsibility.
>
> "For too long, international law has been ignored in the Syrian conflict, and it is our shared duty to uphold international standards of humanity." (*SG/SM/18487*)

Thirdly, there is a danger that the Security Council, which is already being marginalized, could lose whatever remaining credibility it might have. That is why, in hind sight, the action taken by the non-permanent members yesterday appears to be not only very timely, but also wise. Will the proposal they made yesterday help find a way out for what otherwise will result in a dangerous development? We believe that it might.

In the light of the fact that the rational for the latest military action is based on the use of chemical weapons — while those responsible remain to be determined and the investigation needs to be speedily concluded — it seems to us that the priority for now should be the adoption by consensus of the draft resolution proposed by the elected members, and, furthermore, as the representative of Egypt said, for the United States and the Russian Federation to exercise greater responsibility and find a way out within their means.

Finally, as we said two days ago (see S/PV.7915), only an inclusive political process will ultimately be able to address the Syrian crisis and prevent the situation from spiralling out of control. There is therefore a need for calm and restraint to de-escalate the situation. We hope that the latest developments will not dampen the prospect for a comprehensive political solution in Syria through the intra-Syrian talks in Geneva.

Mr. Yelchenko (Ukraine): We were also shocked by the terrorist act in Stockholm and express our solidarity with and condolences to Sweden.

First of all, I would like to stress that we came here not to discuss yesterday's strike by the United States but the consequences of the terrible and deadly chemical-weapons attack of last Tuesday.

I would also like to draw the attention of my colleagues to the statement issued by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine that indicates, inter alia, that any use of chemical weapons is an outrageous violation of international law and constitutes a war crime; the perpetrators of such acts have to be held accountable; and impunity for a violator of international law in the use of chemical weapons leads to further crimes.

The chronic blocking of the work of the Security Council by Russia is unacceptable. The Syrian regime's sponsors and advocates also bear responsibility for the use of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) in Syria and the subsequent deaths and suffering among Syria's civilian population.

The United States actions must be supported to prevent the regime from committing any further war crimes, including against the civilian population. Ukraine considers the United States missile strike against a military target, namely, the airbase from which an air strike to deploy chemical weapons was launched against Khan Shaykhun on 4 April, to be an appropriate and proportionate response. It is a clear signal that the use of WMDs will no longer be tolerated.

Yesterday's events were long overdue. For years, the Council was paralysed with regard to many important international security issues, including the Syrian issue. For all intents and purposes, it was practically held hostage by one delegation that abused its status as a permanent member and practiced the approach of "my way or no way".

The Council's efforts to address the Syrian crisis have been blocked by Russia's use of the veto on seven occasions — that is, seven immobilizing vetoes and the pairs of thousands of Syrian children's eyes who will never see the light of day again. All means were employed to obstruct any meaningful action by the Council: obfuscation, distractions, diversions, outright lies and even bullying. As a result, despite the best efforts of its members on numerous occasions, the Security Council was not able to deliver because of the intransigence of the Russian delegation.

Ukraine does not consider the draft resolution proposed by the Russian delegation to be either adequate to the circumstances or a proper reaction by the international community to the horrible mass murder of people in Idlib province. Given the brutal facts on the ground, it is actually adding insult to injury. We cannot accept a reference to this crime as "the alleged incident with chemical weapons" or "reportedly causing large-scale loss of life". Really? An "incident"? A "reported loss of life"? Does the Russian delegation not watch television? Or maybe it means to assert that what is in that horrible footage from the country was staged.

Furthermore, the draft resolution suggests that the key focus of the international response to the use of weapons of mass destruction against civilians, instead of promoting the prompt identification and bringing to justice of the perpetrators and the taking of steps to prevent future attacks, should be limited to considering the composition of the personnel investigating team based on the principle of a broad-based and balanced geographical distribution. Is this a terribly important issue? No: it is not serious. Such an approach is aimed at postponing practical investigations. We therefore see it as a shameless attempt to undermine the credibility of the Security Council.

When the United Nations is unable to take action, the resulting void is filled. As my delegation stated in this Chamber just two days ago (see S/PV.7915), endless talks cannot be the substitute for concrete action. We also reject the assertion by the Russian Federation that the United States action constitutes an act of aggression. The Russian side has lost the moral high ground in such claims after its invasion of Georgia, its occupation and attempted annexation of Crimea and after launching armed aggression against my country in the Donbass region, which continues until this day. The deafening sound of salvos of Russian Grad missiles and artillery shells pounding Ukraine's territory and bringing death and destruction render hollow all Kremlin statements on the subject of respect for international law. At the very least, the Russians are utterly hypocritical. I call on the Russian delegation to stop mocking the Security Council and stop calling others paranoiacs. Rather, they should look at themselves.

Ukraine continues to believe that the final settlement of the Syrian conflict can be achieved only through a political solution. In the light of the recent escalation, the only way forward is a reinvigorated political process, a reanimation of the ceasefire and a true commitment to a genuine political transition based on Geneva communiqué (S/2012/522, annex) and resolution 2254 (2015). We therefore urge the Syrian regime and its backers to think carefully before embarking upon an escalated level once again, and instead read the situation correctly in a way that would give peace a chance.

The events of this week sent a clear signal to all of us. The international community can ill-afford a dysfunctional Security Council. A failure by this body to discharge its duties in an objective manner, to stand up for what is right, to ensure accountability for violators of international law, undermines its moral standing. Moreover, when the time and energy of its members are expended in attempts to achieve unity and consensus by basically shielding the perpetrators of the most vicious of crimes from responsibility, it destroys its credibility.

I call on all members of the Security Council to remember that its main task is not to achieve consensus on any given issue at any cost, but to work diligently and responsibly to maintain international peace and security. When the United Nations is found wanting, opportunistic and unscrupulous types will always rush in to explore opened weaknesses in order to achieve their own political or other goals, thus creating more demand for a just and adequate response. If the United Nations persists in inaction, sooner or later the response will come from outside the United Nations system. Therefore, obstructionists whose identities are well known have only themselves to blame for events not playing out according to their desired scenarios.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of the United States.

For six years, the world has watched as the Syrian Government and its leader, Bashar Al-Assad, have terrorized their own people. They have murdered hundreds of thousands and displaced millions. They have broken international law and violated numerous United Nations resolutions. They have committed criminal acts that shock the conscience of all humankind.

The international community has repeatedly expressed its outrage. The Joint Investigative Mechanism has found, beyond any doubt, that the Syrian regime has used chemical weapons against its own people multiple times. On Tuesday, the Al-Assad regime launched yet another chemical attack on civilians, murdering innocent men, women and children in the most gruesome way. Al-Assad did that because he thought he could get away with it. He thought he could get away with it because he knew that Russia would have his back. That changed last night.

As I warned on Wednesday (see S/PV.7915, when the international community consistently fails in its duty to act collectively, there are times when States are compelled to take their own action. The indiscriminate use of chemical weapons against innocent civilians is one of those times. The United States will not stand by when chemical weapons are used. It is in our vital national security interests to prevent the spread and use of chemical weapons. Our military destroyed the airfield from which this week's chemical strike took place. We were fully justified in doing so. The moral stain of the Al-Assad regime could no longer go unanswered. His crimes against humanity could no longer be met with empty words. It was time to say "enough", but not only say it; it was time to act. Bashar Al-Assad must never use chemical weapons again, ever.

While the Syrian regime is responsible for the chemical-weapon attack, it is not the only guilty party. The Iranian Government bears a heavy responsibility. It has propped up and shielded Syria's brutal dictator for years. Iran continues to play a role in the bloodshed in Syria. The Russian Government also bears considerable responsibility. Every time Al-Assad has crossed the line of human decency Russia has stood beside him. We had hoped the Security Council would move forward but Russia made it known, as it has done seven times before, that it would use its veto once again to cover up for the Al-Assad regime.

Further delay by compromising with Russia for a watered-down draft resolution would have only strengthened Al-Assad. Strengthening Al-Assad will lead only to more murders. We were not going to allow that. But it is even more than that: Russia is supposed to be a guarantor of the removal of chemical weapons from Syria. Think about that. Russia is supposed to have removed all the chemical weapons from Syria. But obviously that has not happened, as innocent Syrians continue to be murdered in chemical attacks. Let us think about the possible reasons for Russia's failure.

It could be that Russia is knowingly allowing chemical weapons to remain in Syria. It could be that Russia has been incompetent in its efforts to remove the chemical weapons. Or it could be that the Al-Assad regime is playing the Russians for fools, telling them that there are no chemical weapons all the while stockpiling them on their bases. The world is waiting for the Russian Government to act responsibly in Syria. The world is waiting for Russia to reconsider its misplaced alliance with Bashar Al-Assad.

The United States will no longer wait for Al-Assad to use chemical weapons without any consequences. Those days are over. But now we must move to a new phase — a drive towards a political solution to this horrific conflict. We expect the Syrian regime and its allies to take the United Nations political process seriously, something they have not done up until this point. We expect Russia and Iran to hold their ally accountable and abide by the terms of the ceasefire. We expect the Security Council to speak loudly and forcefully when the regime or its allies undermine the political process and countless of our own resolutions.

The United States took a very measured step last night. We are prepared to do more, but we hope that will not be necessary. It is time for all civilized nations to stop the horrors that are taking place in Syria and for them to demand a political solution.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Mr. Mounzer (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): First of all, my delegation wishes to thank both the Russian Federation and Bolivia for joining us in the convening of this urgent meeting.

At the very outset, I have a question for the Under-Secretary General, who said that the Syrian Government described the attack as "an aggression", but he did not give us description according to the Charter of the United Nations. At 3.42 this morning, 7 April, the United States, using a number of missiles, committed a flagrant and barbaric act of aggression against a Syrian Arab Air Force base in the central area of our country, which led to a number of people being martyred and many injured, including women and children, as well as wide-ranging material damage.

This treacherous act of aggression constitutes a grave violation of the Charter of the United Nations as well of as all international norms and laws. The United States attempted to justify it with empty pretexts and fabricated arguments that claimed that the Syrian Arab Army had used chemical weapons in Khan Shaykhun, without genuine knowledge of what had happened or identifying who was responsible. Those are the very same pretexts used by terrorist organizations and their handlers — in Washington, D.C., Ankara, Riyadh, Doha, Tel Aviv, London and Paris — as well as their media outlets.

The Syrian Arab Republic has stressed that the Syrian Arab Army does not have chemical weapons in the first place; that it would never use such weapons in any of its operations against armed terrorist groups; and that it condemns the use of such weapons as being unjustified under any conditions. In this regard, we would like to note that it has become well known that those weapons have been used and stockpiled in many parts of Syria by armed terrorist groups in cooperation with — or, rather, with a wink and a nod from — certain ruling regimes in the region and outside it, including Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and some European States, which completely ignored all the facts and documented information on the use of chemical weapons on many occasions by terrorists in many parts of the Syrian Arab Republic.

This act of aggression will send erroneous messages to terrorist groups, emboldening them them to use chemical weapons in future and to continue perpetrating terrorist acts against Syrian civilians. Following this aggression, Jabhat Al-Nusra and the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), both of which are terrorist organizations, and their affiliates waged many attacks on many parts of Syria. However, the Syrian Arab Army and its allies in the war against terrorism are confronting them, despite desperate attempts by others to support them. The American aggression falls under that umbrella.

This condemnable aggression is a grave continuation of the same erroneous American strategy that began six years ago to provide all types of assistance to what the United States calls the "moderate armed opposition". This strategy harms counter-terrorism efforts by the Syrian Arab Army and its partners. It makes the United States of America a partner of ISIL, Jabhat Al-Nusra and other terrorist groups, which from day one of the unjust war against Syria have attacked Syrian army positions and military bases, as well as our infrastructure and civilians.

Let me recall here in the Security Council that the United States of America leads a purported alliance against ISIL. However, the real achievements of that coalition are killing civilians and striking infrastructure in Syria. Its real goal is to weaken the Syrian Arab Army and its allies as they confront terrorist groups.

It is in that context that we also see the air strikes by this illegal coalition against the Syrian Arab Army in Jebal Thardeh, around the city of Deir ez-Zor, on 17 September 2016, in an attempt to secure a safe corridor for ISIL elements between Syrian and Iraqi territories.

Today's aggression was aimed at saving Jabhat Al-Nusra terrorists following the grave damage inflicted upon them by the Syrian Arab Army and its allies in the centre of the country after they attacked peaceful villages and cities in the area. In that regard, I note that, according to media reports, the United States Congress recently entacted a law allowing the United States Administration to send man-portable air-defence systems to armed terrorist groups in Syria.

Just two days ago here in the Security Council (see S/PV.7893), we warned that three colonialist permanent Member States in the Council had a renewed appetite to repeat the lies and stories spread by the United States and the United Kingdom 14 years ago here in the Chamber to justify the destruction and occupation of Iraq by way of the major lie about weapons of mass destruction. Perhaps diplomatic history has come full circle now in a regrettable, farcical scene in which Colin Powell, the then Secretary of State of the United States, tried to delude the international community and the United Nations in order to justify his country's aggression against Iraq by talking about highly credible information. Today the United States of America pursues its misleading policy to justify its aggression against Syria by relying on fabricated information provided by the Jabhat Al-Nusra terrorists.

This aggression incontrovertibly proves that Syria has always been correct that successive American Administrations will not change their fruitless policies of targeting States and subjugating people to their will and to impose hegemony around the world.

International public opinion and the people of the free world have no doubt that successive United States, United Kingdom and French Administrations have for decades cared neither for democracy or freedom nor for human rights — indeed, let alone the well-being of people or their security and stability. These are just pretexts to wage war and occupy other States, divide them and control their wealth and energy resources. What is truly disgusting today is that these Governments that have supported Wahhabi thinking — the extremist terrorist ideology of the Al-Saud entity since its creation — are today orchestrating and investing in terrorism without any concern for people's lives, including their own, after terrorism arrived at their doorstep, because of these misguided, hypocritical policies.

I assure Council members that if the United States Administration is still delusional that it has succeeded in that blatant aggression in supporting the terrorist gangs and organizations on the ground, the response of the Syrian Arab Republic and its allies will be greater determination to maintain their patriotic duty to defend the Syrian people and to crush terrorism wherever it may be in order to restore security and safety to the territories of the Syrian Arab Republic.

The Syrian Arab Republic strongly condemns this act of aggression by the United States of America, which runs counter to the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, especially given the status of the United States as a permanent member of the Security Council, which is responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security — let alone the fact that such acts of aggression hold the potential to sow total chaos in many parts of the world and will make the law of the jungle the only way to deal with regional and economic crises, with no heed paid to the Charter of the United Nations and international law.

I ask those who talk about the respect of the Charter: Did this colonial trio respect the Charter when they killed millions of innocent people, starting in South Asia and all the way through Latin America? The representative of France spoke about exceptions. They are the ones who should not be the exception and should be held accountable for the July 2016 slaughter of more than 200 civilians by their warplanes in Toukhan Al-Kubra, in Rural Aleppo. They and their allies in what is called the "international coalition" should be held accountable for the killing of more than 800 civilians in Syria from late July 2016 to 22 March 2017. They must be held accountable for their support of armed terrorist groups and for providing them with political cover so as to continue their acts of terrorism against my own country.

The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic, based on its belief that every effort must be mobilized to combat terrorism, and out of respect for the rules of international law and the Charter of the United Nations, calls on the Security Council to shoulder its responsibilities in accordance with the Charter, condemn this act of aggression and ensure that it will not be repeated. It is an act that threatens peace and security in the region and around the world.

The President: I acknowledge the statement made by the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic.

The representative of the Russian Federation has aksed for the floor to make a further statement.

Mr. Safronkov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I take the floor again only to say that I would like to ask the representatives of the United States and other countries not to insult my country. They have absolutely no moral right to do so. We do not behave in that way ourselves.

I would simply like to say that Ambassador Haley, who has only just taken up her post here, has a real chance, both as Permanent Representative of the United States and as the current President of the Security Council, to restore the collective work of the Security Council to a healthy state. But that will not happen if she claims a national point of view to be an absolute truth. We would first like to ensure that our work in the Council is mutually respectful.

The meeting rose at 1.30 p.m.